

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



May 2019

Vol. 124, No. 5

₹ 15.00



# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

## *Great Secret of Happiness II*

I know the difficulties. Tremendous they are, and ninety percent of us become discouraged and lose heart, and in our turn, often become pessimists and cease to believe in sincerity, love, and all that is grand and noble. So, we find men who in the freshness of their lives have been forgiving, kind, simple, and guileless, become in old age lying masks of men. Their minds are a mass of intricacy. There may be a good deal of external policy, possibly. They are not hot-headed, they do not speak, but it would be better for them to do so; their hearts are dead and, therefore, they do not speak. They do not curse, not become angry; but it would be better for them to be able to be angry, a thousand times better, to be able to curse. They cannot. There is death in the heart, for cold hands have seized upon it, and it can no more act, even to utter a curse, even to use a harsh word. All this we have to avoid: therefore I say, we require superdivine power. Superhuman power is not strong enough. Superdivine strength is the only way, the one way out. By it alone we can pass through all these intricacies, through these showers of miseries, unscathed. We may be cut to pieces, torn asunder, yet our hearts must grow nobler and nobler



all the time. It is very difficult, but we can overcome the difficulty by constant practice. We must learn that nothing can happen to us, unless we make ourselves susceptible to it. I have just said, no disease can come to me until the body is ready; it does not depend alone on the germs, but upon a certain predisposition which is already in the body. We get only that for which we are fitted. Let us give up our pride and understand this, that never is misery undeserved. There never has been a blow undeserved: there never has been an evil for which I did not pave the way with my own hands. We ought to know that. Analyse yourselves and you will find that every blow you have received, came to you because you prepared yourselves for it. You did half, and the external world did the other half: that is how the blow came. That will sober us down.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 2.6-7.



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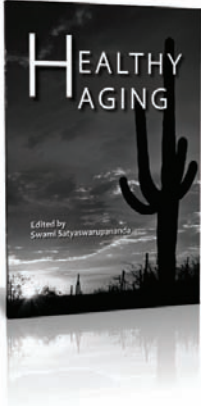


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# Healthy Aging

by Swami Satyaswarupananda

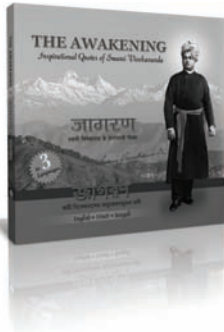
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The original quotes of Swami Vivekananda are mainly in English and have been collected from The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (9 vols. set), while the Hindi translations are quoted from Vivekananda Sahitya (10 vols. set), both published by Advaita Ashrama. The Bengali translations are from Swami Vivekananda Bani O Rachana (10 vols. set) published by Udbodhan Office, Ramakrishna Math, Baghbar, Kolkata. Enthusiastic readers may refer to these titles for further study and understanding of Swami Vivekananda's teachings.



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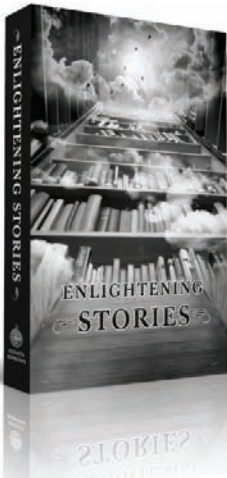
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**Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!**

May 2019  
Vol. 124, No. 5

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तं धनुः शरीरमोमित्येतच्छरः शिखास्य मनस्तमोलक्षणं भित्वा तमोऽतमाविष्टमागच्छत्यथाविष्टं  
भित्वाऽलातचक्रमिव स्फुरन्तमादित्यवर्णमूर्जस्वन्तं ब्रह्म तमसः पर्यमपश्यद्यदमुष्मिन्नादित्येऽथ सोमेऽग्नौ विद्युति  
विभात्यथ खल्वेनं दृष्ट्वाऽमृतत्वं गच्छतीत्येवं ह्याह ।

ध्यानमन्तः परे तत्त्वे लक्ष्येषु च निधीयते ।

अतोऽविशेषविज्ञानं विशेषमुपगच्छति ॥

मानसे च विलीने तु यत् सुखं चात्मसाक्षिकं ।

तद्ब्रह्म चामृतं शुकं सा गतिर्लोक एव सः ॥

॥ ६.२४ ॥

*Athany-atrapy-uktam dhanuh shariram aum-ity-etach-chharah shikhasya manas-tamo-lakshnam bhitva tamo'tama-avishtam-agachchhaty-atha-avishtam bhitva'latachakram-iva sphurantam aditya-varnam-urjasvantam brahma tamasah paryam-apashyad-yad-amushminn-aditye'tha some'gnau vidyuti vibhatyatha khalvenam drishtva'mritatvam gachchhatityevam hyaha. Dhyanamantah pare tattve lakshyeshu cha nidhiyate.*

*Ato'vishesha-vijnanam vishesham upagachchhati.*

*Manase cha viline tu yat sukham chatma-sakshikam.*

*Tad-brahma chamritam shukram sa gatiir-loka eva sah.*

(6.24)

And thus it has been said elsewhere: 'The body is the bow. The arrow is Om. The mind is its point, darkness is the mark. Having pierced through the darkness, one goes to what is not enveloped in darkness. Then having pierced through what is thus enveloped, one sees Brahman, who sparkles like a wheel of fire, of the colour of the sun, full of vigour, beyond darkness, that which shines in yonder sun, also in the moon, in fire, in lightning. And indeed, having seen this Brahman, one attains immortality.' For thus has it been said: 'Meditation is directed to the highest being within and to external objects. Hence, unqualified understanding becomes qualified. But, when the mind is dissolved and there is bliss of which the Self is the witness, that is Brahman, the immortal, the radiant, that is the way. That indeed is the true world.' (6.24)



# THIS MONTH

**W**HY DO WE THINK? What are the different forms of thinking? What are the roots of thoughts? How to get rid of thoughts? All these questions are answered and discussed in **Thinking and Sharing Experience**.

In **Cancelled in Kansas**, Diane Marshall, graphic artist and art historian, Missouri, USA, discusses a lecture that Swami Vivekananda did not give, and articles printed in Kansas newspapers immediately before Swamiji went there. In terms of historical understanding, they 'bookend' that event, forming both a preface and an epilogue to the Hiawatha lecture.

Vedanta is a great path of spirituality and a great world view. Vedanta is explained by Swami Pavitrnananda (d. 1977), a former minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of New York and a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* in **What is Vedanta?** This is an edited transcript of a talk he delivered at the Vedanta Society of New York on 5 October 1958.

Sri Ramakrishna built up a unique philosophy. In **Sri Ramakrishna and the Bodhisattva Ideal**, Swami Kritarthananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, draws our attention mainly to two lesser-known aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy. One is the Bodhisattva ideal and the other is the *sarvamukti* ideal, meaning the liberation of all. These two have come to bear upon the spirit of serving God in all with an attitude of worship in a great measure.

Dr R Lekshmi, head of the philosophy department, Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram and O Priya, assistant

professor of philosophy, University College, Thiruvananthapuram discuss **Recontextualising Caste—An Analysis Based on Swami Vivekananda's Views and Postcolonial Ideology**.

The young have wonderful insights on various issues. In *Young Eyes*, such insights are brought to the readers every month. This month, Nilanjan Saha Chakraborty, a school student of class four from Adamas International School, Belgharia, Kolkata, shares his thoughts on bullying in his article **Facing Bullying**.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Moksha**. Understanding this popular word is necessary to understand its meaning.

Devotees achieve great power by their devotion. Their prayers make possible the impossible. The greatness of devotion is shown in the story **Sri Rama and Sri Krishna**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Anmika Kathaigal*.

Joseph E Stiglitz, professor of economics, Columbia University and the winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences and Bruce C Greenwald, the Robert Heilbrunn Professor of Finance and Asset Management at Columbia Business School and director of the Heilbrunn Center for Graham and Dodd Investing have written the book **Creating A Learning Society: A New Approach to Growth, Development, and Social Progress**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

## *Thinking and Sharing Experience*

**W**HAT IS THINKING? It is a process of mentation. The ideas of doership and enjoyership emerge because of one's attachment to the ideas of 'I' and 'mine'. 'I' refers to the sense of ego and 'mine' refers to the sense of possession or emphasising the ego. The ego gets accentuated by connecting it to bodies, places, persons, events, or things. That in turn produces further ideas of possession or the idea of 'mine'. For instance, a person might have one crore rupees, but it might not be sufficient for that person as there could be the desire to own more and more. It is addictive to increase the instances of references to one's ego. In truth, all express admissions of ownership of any kind are only different degrees of narcissism.

The ideas of 'I' and 'mine' create the biggest enemy of a certain and constant idea of oneself—desire. Desires make one to resolve and think. Resolve leads to actions that strengthen the idea of doership, the idea that one is the doer of actions. One might argue that it indeed is the case and that one does indeed perform actions. But, such a position would then completely negate the concept or possibility of one's innate tendencies, also called samskaras. If a person is indeed the doer of actions, then it should be easy for that person to do anything without any particular bias, leaning, or even liking for anything. However, we know that this is not the case. Everyone has specific likes and dislikes. These likes and dislikes are the manifestations of our samskaras, which in turn are born out of the ideas of doership and enjoyership.

Thus, thought arises due to desires. When we think, in reality, we are dabbling with desires. The deeper we think, the stronger does

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**All admissions of ownership of any kind are only different degrees of narcissism.**

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our attachment to desires become. However, if we think of getting rid of desires, of going beyond the process of thinking, of transcending the mind and the senses, then that kind of thinking would take us away from desires, and would make our existing desires weaker and weaker. When one thinks of undertakings and possessions, even the possession of knowledge, one drags oneself to deeper realms of ignorance. On the other hand, if one thinks of anything other than undertakings and possessions, for instance, if one thinks of God and how to restrain the senses and the mind, then one is gradually relieved of ignorance, to that extent. So, the key to free oneself from the traps of desires is to not think of oneself as the doer and enjoyer and also to not think of undertakings and possessions.

Thinking for the sake of thinking and not for the sake of associating one's 'I' to it, is redeeming and revealing and eventually leads to the realisation of one's true nature, Brahman. However, there is another aspect of thinking that occupies a considerable amount of time in our lives. This is remembering from memory. When we think anything, it is stored as a memory, primarily because we associate our 'I' with that. Even an


information that falls in a neutral class of things like general knowledge, is remembered by us, because it pertains to our knowing that information. The process of remembering things or taking out things from our memory, could be seen as thinking about thinking or rethinking thoughts. When we remember something with the association of ideas of doership and enjoyership, every time we remember such a thought, we create a fresh samskara of the action that led to the memory in the first place.

Most psychological illnesses can be traced to a traumatic experience that created a bad memory. One of the coping mechanisms of the human mind is to bury an unpleasant memory deep into the subconscious mind. However, such deep-seated traumas cause psychological problems and could make a person dysfunctional, that is, that person would not be able to perform the regular activities of everyday life. So, one of the important steps in cleaning the mind is to uncover such deep-seated traumas and to understand that the memory of the trauma does not matter as that particular experience has passed and possibly would not be repeated. So, it would be wise and much better if one uncovers such trauma and lets it out, and stops thinking about it.

So, we add another chain to our bondage when we think and add yet another chain when we remember. But, thoughts have a strange way of increasing our bondage, even beyond thinking and remembering. This happens when remembering or memory takes a strange turn and we think that we are sharing our experience for the benefit of others. It is a great fallacy to think that one's experience could be of any help to others. A person experiences something in a particular fashion because of one's attachment to that particular thing and also because of one's samskaras, which are always subjective and specific to a particular individual. The very fact that someone

listens to another's experience is also directed by one's samskaras; both sharing and listening to experiences are guided by samskaras. One cannot, rather should not, generalise one's experience and consider it to be on the same level as that of others.

Since every person has a different set of samskaras and since every person's experience of anything will be influenced by those samskaras, it is futile to share experience. The only reason we share our experience is because we attach the idea of 'mine' to our experience and strengthen this idea with the thought that other people are also following our experience. This is a third chain of bondage. Thus, thinking, remembering, and sharing are nothing but three different levels of bondage or three traps into which we fall every moment of our lives. Sharing creates another problem too. It emphasises the remembering of an experience and the living of such an experience. In other words, sharing requires that we do things with the ideas of 'I' and 'mine'. However, a constant emphasis on 'I' and 'mine' that would lead to an idea of 'our' would only increase the mire of ignorance.

The intellect, particularly the spiritual intellect, has to be awakened and sharpened at all times. An ever alert and vigilant mind can prevent one from falling into intricate traps of ignorance like needless thinking, brooding, and egotistical sharing of things. The enemies of oneself are the ideas of 'I' and 'mine' leading to the ideas of doership and enjoyership. These ideas make one's actions to bear results in the form of samskaras or tendencies that are carried across lifetimes. So, the aim is to destroy these ideas by destroying desires through constant discernment. Hence, one cannot share experience in the true sense of the term, but can only attempt to transcend thought and memory. 



# Cancelled in Kansas

Diane Marshall

LAST MONTH'S ARTICLE, 'A Real Indian in Hiawatha', covered a lecture that Swami Vivekananda gave on 1 December 1893 in Hiawatha, Kansas.<sup>1</sup> This article concerns a lecture that he did not give, and articles printed in Kansas newspapers immediately before Swamiji went there. In terms of historical understanding I think they 'bookend' that event, forming both a preface and an epilogue to the Hiawatha lecture.

To recap, Swamiji gave three ticketed lectures at the Central Church of Christ in Des Moines, Iowa on 27, 28, and 30 November. On the 29, however, he had been booked to give a lecture in Ottawa, Kansas, 280 miles away. That lecture was cancelled by telegram on the 28.<sup>2</sup> Either the bureau did an especially inconsiderate job of scheduling Thanksgiving week or someone caused a mix-up. Or, Swamiji was held over by popular demand, because the *Iowa State Register* of 3 December said his stay 'was happily prolonged by the cancellation of engagements farther west'.<sup>3</sup>

A little confusion still remains: on 21 November Swamiji had written to Ellen Hale that he would be in Des Moines until the 29. According to the 23 November *Hiawatha Journal*, the organisers of the lectures in Hiawatha and Des Moines had been corresponding with each other, and Swamiji was advertised to lecture 'three evenings in succession'<sup>4</sup> in Des Moines. Swamiji did not arrive in Des Moines until the 27. There may have been some misunderstanding over the number of lectures. Logically, the



Lyceum Bureau must have expected Swamiji to travel from Ottawa to Hiawatha. A change of plan was declared during his second lecture at the Central Church of Christ: 'He has consented, it was announced last night, to remain in Des Moines a few days longer.'<sup>5</sup>

If Swamiji had gone to Ottawa, then he would have stayed there on his first Thanksgiving in America—and as yet I have no idea who his host might have been, if not lumber baron Samuel B Rohrbaugh, the proprietor of the auditorium. Would he have been as welcoming as Rev. Harvey O Breeden and his wife, Flora? Rev. Breeden had a long career of accomplishment because he gave sincere and consistent encouragement to many regardless of their affiliation.<sup>6</sup> As to being on the road and away from friends at Thanksgiving time, Ralph Waldo Emerson was once caught up in a contract dispute over a speaking engagement that he believed was cancelled due to the Chicago Fire of 1871. It was an argument that he lost, and he was forced to give up Thanksgiving dinner with his family and catch a train to Chicago to give the lecture.<sup>7</sup>

It is fair to surmise that the engagement in Ottawa was cancelled so Swamiji could extend his series of lectures in Des Moines. Rev. Breeden arranged for him to give a chapel talk to the students of Drake University on the morning of the 29.<sup>8</sup> Swamiji's first opportunity to speak to American students as a body was at Drake University. At least he caught their attention the day before the holiday, because on Thanksgiving, then as now, their minds turned to college football. Nebraska beat University of Iowa that day, 20 to 18.

Swamiji's lecture was first announced in the *Ottawa Daily Republic* on Saturday, 25 November. Tickets to 'the greatest lecture ever delivered in Ottawa' were on sale at Armstrong's.<sup>9</sup> The auditorium, where he was to speak, had been built in 1891.<sup>10</sup> The wooden building was 55 feet wide by 146 feet long, with gas jet lighting, and it seated 1,300 persons. The drop curtain, painted in Chicago, featured a Scottish castle. The auditorium burned spectacularly on 3 March 1895.<sup>11</sup>

Swamiji's advent appeared, at first, to have been eagerly anticipated in an eyewitness article printed on 27 November. A closer reading, however, reveals that the text had been lifted almost entirely from the introduction to the 1893–4 Des Moines Lecture Course in *The Christian Worker* edited by Rev. Breeden.<sup>12</sup> Or was it?

At the Auditorium.

#### GOOD NEWS FOR OTTAWA.

One of the grandest opportunities of a life time will be presented to the Ottawa people on next Wednesday evening, the 29. One of the greatest men in the world will honor our city with one of his famous lectures—Swami Vivekananda, a Hindoo monk. ... Vivekananda is one of the most remarkable men of the world. He came to the World's parliament of religions to represent the Hindoo faith, the mother religion of India. He is to begin with, a profound philosopher, a trained thinker and a scholar with few superiors in the world. He is as proficient in the use of the English language as any American, and as eloquent as any lecturer today on the American platform.

Those who attended the parliament of religions will recall the fact that every appearance of Vivekananda on the platform was a signal for a demonstration of applause. The reporter witnessed a scene in the science department of the parliament so striking that he can never forget it. After delivering a discourse on the 'Theory of the Incarnation', Vivekananda turned to his auditors, who were bright and critical scholars, teachers, preachers and literary women, with the statement: 'If you have any questions concerning my religion or philosophy I will be glad to answer you.' It was a hazardous thing for an American scholar to do, but he was equal to the emergency. Though questions were poured down upon him, bearing almost an avalanche of thought, he caught them all and turned them back in such lucid and logical answers as to astound everyone present. Vivekananda dresses

in the typical garb of his cast [sic], usually in a scarlet robe with an orange colored turban. His lecture here will be either on 'New Information Concerning India,' 'The Theory of the Incarnation' or 'The Doctrine of Love.' Neither of the above gentlemen could possibly have been secured at any other time than this Columbian year, and just after the parliament of religions.<sup>13</sup>

Was Rev. Breeden really the writer of this piece? Would he have called himself 'the reporter' if he had witnessed this particular scene in person? According to the 24 November *Brown County World*, Breeden had heard Swamiji speak before, but for his magazine, he evidently used prepared promotional text. Rev. Breeden's well-established annual lecture course was certainly influential beyond Des Moines, but if Ottawa had consulted him before booking Swamiji, would there have been a scheduling conflict? It is more likely that the Lyceum Bureau advertised Swamiji independently via mail to their list of lecture clubs and theatres, and Des Moines and Ottawa responded separately. Even though the *Republic's* announcement concerns a lecture that never happened, it bears repetition as an example of the literature that the Slayton Lyceum Bureau used to advertise Swamiji. Although the article above is promotional, it is not hyperbole; it must be an amalgam of genuine reports of Swamiji at the Parliament.

The good news for Ottawa was short-lived. Swamiji's cancellation was tersely reported in the *Ottawa Daily Republic* the next day: 'A telegram has been received from Swami Nivekananda [sic] stating that he cannot possibly fill his engagement here on Wednesday evening. The lecture is declared off.'<sup>14</sup> I imagine that Breeden and Swamiji went to the telegraph office together. Breeden probably cleared the change of plans with the lecture bureau and then Swamiji wired the Ottawa cancellation

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Ottawa Daily Republic, 27 November 1893, Page 3



himself. It is possible that Rev. Breeden told Swamiji that he did not know the people in Ottawa, but he knew that Rev. Campbell in Hiawatha was a good man.

I am sure people in Ottawa were keenly disappointed. It is usually futile to indulge in speculation over what might have been, but if Swamiji had gone to Ottawa, Kansas, he would have had the benefit of a larger and possibly more diverse population to draw from for an audience than he found in Hiawatha. In 1893 Ottawa was more than twice the size of Hiawatha with a population of about 6,250—plus Ottawa University, a small Baptist college. But had he gone to Ottawa, he would not have had the same access to college students that Rev. Breeden provided.

That same day—27 November—a very significant article appeared on the front page of the Pittsburg, Kansas *Daily World*.<sup>15</sup> It had been reprinted from the previous Sunday's *Kansas City Journal*. Pittsburg was 110 miles southeast of Ottawa and 125 miles south of Kansas City. The editorial was written by Col. Robert T Van Horn (1824–1916). Van Horn was one of the most influential shapers of Kansas City, Missouri. The town had a population of 2,500 when he arrived in 1855, and by the time he retired from public service it had grown to 1,63,000. A Unionist, he had been elected three times Mayor from a mostly Southern sympathising electorate. He earned the rank of Colonel during the Civil War, and was wounded in battle. He served four terms in Congress as a Republican. He was instrumental in building the Hannibal railroad bridge over the Missouri River, which Swamiji crossed on his way to California in 1899. He published and edited the first daily newspaper in Jackson County, the *Kansas City Journal*: 'Visionary, legislator, business booster, outstanding editor—he lived

it all. Early residents considered Colonel Van Horn an intellectual giant, a one-of-a-kind leader who helped turn Kansas City into a metropolis.'<sup>16</sup>

One might suppose that Col Van Horn, being a newspaper man, would have attended at least part of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 since it was such a newsworthy event. His editorial, however, makes no reference to having witnessed it. Rather, he confines himself to examining the text of Swamiji's paper on Hinduism, which was distributed in a pamphlet containing papers from the non-Christian delegates. A few of the quotes cited by Van Horn vary slightly from the version in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 'Paper on Hinduism.'<sup>17</sup> This pamphlet must have been printed and circulated several weeks before Barrows's or Neeley's histories of the Parliament were published in early December 1893:

Revived Again.

Col. Van Horn in Yesterday's K.C. Journal.

We mean the interest in the World's Congress of Religions during the world's fair. The papers are being printed, and the magazine[s] are engaged in their discussion[s]. It is curious to note that the interest is all in reference to the Oriental papers—the religions of the 'heathen' peoples. Suddenly as if by the rising of a curtain we have the secret of all the religions, and can trace the evolution of our own with clearness and demonstration.

We have a pamphlet before us containing the papers read by the accredited representatives of all those Oriental faiths: That of the Parsee or Zoroastrian, by Jinanji Jamshodji Modi; of Hindooism, by Swami Dvivakananda, of India; of Judaism, by Dr. Isaac M. Wise, of Cincinnati; of Confucianism, by Kung Hisen Ho, of China; Buddhism, by Rt. Rev. Zitsuza Ashista, of Japan; of Mohammedanism, by Alexander Russell Webb, an American convert to Islam.

No intelligent person should undertake the discussion of the subject of religion, at least historically, without having first read these papers. They are from men who came from the other side of the globe, with but two exceptions, to tell the world what their faiths were and we must know what they say.

The student can see as by a flash of light the analogy between Zoroastrianism, Judaism and our own Christian system—theologically we mean. The principle of good and evil and their personation is the underlying idea of all—and Islam is but a restatement of the same basic Idea. This Zoroastrian ideal seems to be that of what might be called a geographical division of the earth—of Central and Western Asia. The root of this is a personal deity representing good and a personality representing evil—or rather this is the corruption of the primitive and higher ideal of the two principles in action in planetary life. Out of this and among the descendants of these central races we have our own religion and the various forms among Semitic peoples. There is one thing common to all these forms of faith—they are creeds of dogma and of limitation—all in the hands of a priesthood and all recognizing obedience and penalties at the pleasure of the personal deity. Of course these differ according to the mentality of the races undertaking to teach, but the basic concept is the same in all.

In Hindooism we find a different form of thought entirely—a purely spiritual religion based upon a purely spiritual concept. Confucianism is a material and moral philosophy, Buddhism a reform as to abuses growing up under the priestly governments of the others, and Mohammedism a reform based on like abuses growing up under Christian domination in those same countries. Christianity itself under this view is the Western conception and embodiment of the ancient ideals first alluded to—the personification of the good and evil principles. Hereafter the discussion on the planes of the ‘higher criticism’



Col. Robert T Van Horn

must follow these organic lines of division. Our own deific concept and its opposite are so familiar that we need not rehearse them here, but as this is the first time we have, in this age, had an authorized statement of the others to an assemblage of the modern world, we will try and summarise them—and for this day touch upon the differing concept from ours—the Hindoo idea.

And we may say at the outset that the distinguishing feature in the Hindoo creed so to speak, is that it has no limitations—no dogmas. One paragraph from the paper before us will make this clearer than words of our own. It is this:

‘Hindoos have received their religion through revelation of the Vedas. They hold that the Vedas are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience—how a book can be without beginning or end.



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The above will show the vast difference between the Hindoo concept and our own, and how utterly irreconcilable are the two schools of thought. As well try to mix oil and water as to install either of these into the mentality of the other—for the basic thought is radically different. As the Vedas, or discovered knowledge, is without end so is creation, and this modern Hindoo dislodges our "in the beginning" by the following from our own science:

"The Vedas teach us that creation is without beginning or end. Science has proved to us that the sum total of the cosmic energy is the same throughout all time. Then if there was a time when nothing existed, where was it this manifested energy? Some say it was in a potential form of God. But then God is sometimes potential and sometime kinetic, which would make him mutable, and everything mutable is a compound and every compound must undergo that change which is called destruction. Therefore God would die. Therefore there never was a time when there was no creation."

One of our young Kansas City missionaries would not be able to do much with such a skilled dialectician as that. But our purpose is that of review, to give the reader an idea of what these "heathen" are and what they think. As to what they are the papers says this:

"Here I stand, and if I shut my eyes and try to conceive my existence, 'I', 'I', 'I', what is the idea before? The idea of a body. Am I, then, nothing but a combination of matter and material substances? The Vedas declare, 'No.' I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I will go on living. Also, I had a past. The soul was not created from nothing, for creation means a combination, and that means a certain future dissolution. If then, the soul was created it must die. Therefore it was not created. Some are born happy, enjoying perfect health, beautiful body, mental vigor, and with all wants supplied. Others are born miserable. Some without hands or feet, some idiots

and only drag out a miserable existence. Why, if they are all created, why does a just and merciful God create one happy and another unhappy?"

That then is the Hindoo idea of what we call "the creation of man." All the answer we can or do have to it is—that it is written, and it is all a mystery. We have only to believe. Yet this pertinacious reasoner will ask: How can we believe anything we can't understand? And there we are helpless again. But this Hindoo has also his unknowable. And when you ask him why this free and perfect soul should be alloted to and imprisoned in this condition of matter, and why this soul so endowed comes to think of itself as a body, this is his reply:

"We have been told the Hindoos shirk the question, and say no such questions can be there; and some thinkers want to answer it by the supposing of one or more quasi perfect beings, and use big scientific names to fill up the gap. But naming is not explaining. The question remains the same: How can the perfect become the quasi perfect; how can the pure, the absolute, change even a microscopic particle of its nature? The Hindoo is sincere. He does not want to take shelter under a sophistry. He is brave enough to face the question in a many fashion. And his answer is: 'I do not know.' I do not know how the perfect being, the soul came to think of itself as imperfect, as joined and conditioned by matter. But the fact is a fact for all that. It is a fact in everybody's consciousness that he thinks of himself as the body. We do not attempt to explain why I am in this body."

Evidently this Hindoo doesn't believe all this wonderful relation, this metamorphosis of thought, has come from eating an apple. "He believes that every soul is a circle, whose circumference is nowhere, but whose center is located in a body, and death means the change of this center from body to body." Death they call freedom. The soul is held to be divine, only held under the bondage of matter, and death is freedom from this bondage. This freedom is spiritual and comes from pure living. And here is a very suggestive and wide reaching statement:

"The Hindoo does not want to live upon words and theories—if there are existences beyond the ordinary sensual existence he wants to come face to face with them. If there is a soul in him which is not matter, if there is an all merciful, universal soul, he will go to him direct. He must see him, and that alone can destroy all doubts. So the best proof a Hindoo sage gives about the soul, about God, is: 'I have seen the soul, I have seen God.'"

And he sums up in these words: "The Hindoo religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing—not in believing, but in being and becoming." Or we may state it in our own words—the Hindoo holds that there is nothing needed to the soul's condition but may be known—or that knowledge is all there is as to this life or the future.

But the great fact in this ancient, most ancient, form of religion is, that it has no limitations on knowledge. Its Vedas may be written from the discovery of to-day as well as ten thousand years ago. The discoveries of these Vedic truths from age to age are called Kishis, and our ideas that

deific wisdom, saviors, etc., must be masculine, will be shocked to hear that "some of the very best of the Kishis are women." Wisdom is thus not confined to one gender.

The intelligent reader will be surprised at the wide intellectual grasp of the Hindoo mind, as well as at its subtlety and metaphysical power. And every here and there will flash out like a revelation an idea that our theologic mentality has been trying to present for a thousand years and had stopped at the crudeness of infancy and want of understanding. In all the range of religious meditation and exposition we are but children in the hands of these masters. We cannot reply, only by asserting: "It is so because it has been so revealed." But when these "revealed" thoughts are shown to be without beginning in the lore of these wonderful people, we have to admit that there was a revelation before ours. The consequence of this fact is not in the per-view of this mention. We can only now see that what is new to us was older than tradition to them when ours came to us—and that the demonstrated immortality of man and the continuity of his conscious and progressive life, now thought to be a modern revelation, was familiar to the Hindoo long before even the advent of our race upon the planet. We are just getting access to the feet of the ancient wisdom.

## Cherokee Chips.

Gathered up fresh on day of publication by HENRY BARNES, who is the authorized agent of THE DAILY WORLD in Cherokee, with his office in Mrs. A. Morrie's millinery store, two doors west of the postoffice.

Miss Julia Bollek, is very sick with congestion of the stomach.

Jess Hitchcock went down to Columbus Saturday evening. There must be some attraction down there for Jess, wonder what it is?

In your Saturday issue our correspondent made a mistake in saying that Ship Bros. concert will be here December 14. It should be December 6th.

On Friday night, just before payday at Fleming, three men "held up" Mr. Moway, they however secured nothing. They also went through the boarding house and secured all they could eat.

Some parties attempted to break in the band about 3:30 this morning. They held Dr. Forney up for an hour and a half, who sleeps above the bank. They drilled a hole in the outer vault door but failed to get it open. They stole a hand car from the Gulf railroad and went west. No arrests have been made.

Parties contemplating a trip to California should remember that the Frisco line can furnish you with a berth a very low figure in a through tourist sleeper, but one hour's ride from Pittsburg before reaching this car which runs to Los Angeles and San Francisco without change. None of our competitors can offer you as good service. Try a trip via this line and secure the best for the money. Depot corner of Second and Broadway.

O. M. CONLEY, Agent

Old papers for sale at this office.



But by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the father of all spirits, were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them.'

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then, nothing but a combination of matter and material substances? The Vedas declare, 'No'. I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I will go on living. Also, I had a past. The soul was not created from nothing, for creation means a combination, and that means a certain future dissolution. If then, the soul was created it must die. Some are born happy, enjoying perfect health, beautiful body, mental vigor, and with all wants supplied. Others are born miserable. Some are without hands or feet, some idiots and only drag out a miserable existence. Why, if they are all created, why does a just and merciful God create one happy and another unhappy?'

That then is the Hindoo idea of what we call 'the creation of man'. All the answer we can or do have to it is—that it is written, and it is all a mystery. We have only to believe. Yet this pertinacious reasoner will ask: How can we believe anything we can't understand? And there we are helpless again. But this Hindoo has also his unknowable. And when you ask him why this free and perfect soul should be allied to and imprisoned [sic] in this condition of matter, and why this soul so endowed comes to think of itself as a body, this is his reply:

'We have been told the Hindoos shirk the question, and say no such questions can be there; and some thinkers want to answer it by the supposing of one or more quasi perfect beings, and use big scientific names to fill up the gab [gap]. But naming is not explaining. The question remains the same: How can the perfect become the quasi perfect; how can the pure, the absolute, change even a microscopic particle of its nature? The Hindoo is sincere. He does not want to take shelter under a sophistry. He is brave enough to raise [raise] the question in a many [manly] fashion. And his answer is: 'I do not know.' I do not know how the perfect being, the soul came to think of itself as imperfect, as joined and conditioned by matter. But the fact is a fact for all that. It is a

fact in everybody's consciousness that he thinks of himself as the body. We do not attempt to explain why I am in this body.'

Evidently this Hindoo doesn't believe all this wonderful relation, this metamorphosis of thought, has come from eating an apple. 'He believes that every soul is a circle, whose circumference is nowhere, but whose center is located in a body, and death means the change of this center from body to body.' Death they call freedom. The soul is held to be divine, only held under the bondage of matter, and death is freedom from this bondage. This freedom is spiritual and comes from pure living. And here is a very suggestive and wide reaching statement:

'The Hindoo does not want to live upon words and theories—if there are existences beyond the ordinary sensual existence he wants to come face to face with them. If there is a soul in him which is not matter, if there is an all merciful, universal soul, he will go to him direct. He must see him, and that alone can destroy all doubts. So the best proof a Hindoo sage gives about the soul, about God, is: 'I have seen the soul, I have seen God.'

And he sums up in these words: 'The Hindoo religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing—not in believing, but in being and becoming.' Or we may state it in our own words—the Hindoo holds that there is nothing needed to the soul's condition but may be known—or that knowledge is all there is as to this life or the future.

But the great fact in this ancient, most ancient, form of religion is, that it has no limitations on knowledge. Its Vedas may be written from the discovery of to-day as well as ten thousand years ago. The discoveries [discoverers] of these Vedic truths from age to age are called Rishis, and our ideas that deific wisdom, saviors, etc., must be masculine, will be shocked to hear that 'some of the very best


of the Rishis are women'. Wisdom is thus not confined to one gender.

The intelligent reader will be surprised at the wide intellectual grasp of the Hindoo mind, as well as at its subtlety and metaphysical power. And every here and there will flash out like a revelation an idea that our theologic mentality has been trying to present for a thousand years and had stopped at the crudeness of infancy and want of understanding. In all the range of religious meditation and exposition we are but children in the hands of these masters. We cannot reply, only by asserting: 'It is so because it has been so revealed.' But when these 'revealed' thoughts are shown to be without beginning in the lore of these wonderful people, we have to admit that there was a revelation before ours. The consequence of this fact is not in the purview of this mention. We can only now see that what is new to us was older than tradition to them when ours came to us—and that the demonstrated immortality of man and the continuity of his conscious and progressive life, now thought to be a modern revelation, was familiar to the Hindoo long before even the advent of our race upon the planet. We are just getting access to the feet of the ancient wisdom.<sup>18</sup>

I find it significant that an astute editor is commenting *not* on Swamiji's appearance or personality or oratory, but on his written ideas—and he finds them revolutionary. After observing that the religions of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and Christianity all depend upon the theological opposition of good versus evil represented by a personal deity and a personification of evil, he wrote with the voice of the future: 'In Hindooism we find a different form of thought entirely—a purely spiritual religion based on a purely spiritual concept' (*ibid.*).

Van Horn's editorial tone was unusually respectful as he considered the Hindu religion

outlined by Swamiji. Van Horn had read the advanced thinkers of the age: Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Wallace, Cope, and others. He called Swamiji a 'pertinacious reasoner' complimenting him on 'the wide intellectual grasp of the Hindoo mind' (ibid.). Van Horn gave Swamiji's paper on Hinduism the same attention that he would give to a paper on science. Examined with impartiality, it was no wonder that brilliant theological solutions flashed 'like a revelation' in his mind as he studied Vedanta for the first time.

Clearly, Van Horn was an editor with an active and open mind. His reputation for setting forth opinions on new topics was considerable. One of his colleagues said: 'There was not a newspaper in New York, Boston, Chicago, or St. Louis that had the reputation that the *Journal* then sustained on Sunday editorials, and these editorials were copied far and wide in many of the leading newspapers of the country.'<sup>19</sup> Van Horn never met Swamiji, but he gave him a fair hearing in the news throughout western Missouri and eastern Kansas. Better yet, Van Horn's editorial was reprinted in the *Ottawa Journal and Triumph* on 14 December. Although Swamiji did not make it to Ottawa in person, a positive review of his paper on Hinduism circulated there. I hope that brought some consolation to whomever placed the 'Good News' report in the *Republic* and had hoped to bring 'one of the greatest men in the world' to their town. 

## Notes and References

1. See Diane Marshall, 'A Real Indian in Hiawatha', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 124/4 (April 2019), 395.
2. *Ottawa Daily Republic*, 28 November 1893.
3. See Eoline, 'Ottawa, Kansas November 1893' <<http://vivekanandaabroad.blogspot.com/2015/04/ottawa-kansas-november-1893.html>> accessed 24 March 2019.
3. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, 6 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), 1.210.
4. See Eoline, 'Hiawatha, Kansas 1 December 1893' <<http://vivekanandaabroad.blogspot.com/2018/09/hiawatha-kansas-1-december-1893.html>> accessed 24 March 2019.
5. *Des Moines Leader*, 29 November 1893, as quoted in Asim Chaudhuri, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Findings* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 404.
6. See 'The Fruits of His Labors Many', *Des Moines Register*, 6 January 1907, 21 <<https://desmoines-register.newspapers.com/image/129031150/>> accessed 24 March 2019.
7. See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols (Boston: Harvard University, 2010), 8.125.
8. See *Daily Iowa Capitol*, 30 November 1893, as quoted in *New Findings*, 410.
9. *Ottawa Daily Republic*, 27 November 1893, 3.
10. *Ottawa Daily Republic*, 12 March 1891, 4.
11. See 'Great Conflagration', *Ottawa Weekly Times*, 5 March 1895, 1. Also see 'Ottawa, Kansas November 1893'.
12. *The Christian Worker*, November 1893, as quoted in *New Findings*, 398–9.
13. *Ottawa Daily Republic*, 27 November 1893, 3.
14. *Ottawa Daily Republic*, 28 November 1893, 3.
15. The same article was repeated in the *Pittsburg, KS Weekly World*, 30 November 1893, 1.
16. Barbara Magerl, *Biography of Robert Van Horn (1824–1916), Newspaperman and Civic Leader* (Kansas City: Kansas City Public Library: Missouri Valley Special Collections, 2003) <[http://www.kchistory.org/sites/default/files/MVSC\\_PDFs/Biographies/Van%20Horn%20C%20Robert%20T.pdf](http://www.kchistory.org/sites/default/files/MVSC_PDFs/Biographies/Van%20Horn%20C%20Robert%20T.pdf)> accessed 24 March 2019. Also See 'Ottawa, Kansas November 1893'.
17. See 'Paper on Hinduism,' in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.6–20.
18. *The Daily World* (Pittsburg, Kansas), 27 November 1893, 1 and 'Ottawa, Kansas November 1893'.
19. J M Greenwood, *Col. Robert T Van Horn: His Life and Public Service* (Kansas City: Greenwood Club, 1905), 20.



# What is Vedanta?

**Swami Pavitrananda**

This [Vedanta] philosophy is very, very ancient; it is the outcome of that mass of ancient Aryan literature known by the name of the Vedas. It is, as it were, the very flower of all the speculations and experiences and analyses, embodied in that mass of literature—collected and culled through centuries.<sup>1</sup>

This Vedanta philosophy has certain peculiarities. In the first place, it is perfectly impersonal; it does not owe its origin to any person or prophet: it does not build itself around one man as a centre. Yet it has nothing to say against philosophies which do build themselves around certain persons (1.387–8).

The Vedanta philosophy, as it is generally called at the present day, really comprises all the various sects that now exist in India (1.357).

The Vedanta claims ... that man is divine, that all this which we see around us is the outcome of that consciousness of the divine. Everything that is strong, and good, and powerful in human nature is the outcome of that divinity, and though potential in many, there is no difference between man and man essentially, all being alike divine. There is, as it were, an infinite ocean behind, and you and I are so many waves, coming out of that infinite ocean; and each one of us is trying his best to manifest that infinite outside (1.388).

Vedanta declares that religion is here and now, because the question of this life and that life, of life and death, this world and that world, is merely one of superstition and prejudice. There is no break in time beyond what we make. What difference is there between ten and twelve o'clock, except what we make by certain changes in nature? Time flows on the

same. So what is meant by this life or that life? It is only a question of time, and what is lost in time may be made up by speed in work. So, says Vedanta, religion is to be realised now. And for you to become religious means that you will start without any religion, work your way up and realise things, see things for yourself; and when you have done that, then, and then alone, you have religion (6.13).

## What is Vedanta?

**I** BELIEVE THAT many of you who come to this Vedanta Centre are now and then faced with the question: 'What is Vedanta?' If I were to answer this question in a parlour talk of one or two minutes, I should be in difficulty. I do not know what answers you give, but I think you sometimes give better answers than I could. It is, perhaps, because you know the difficulties in the mind of the questioner. For me, it is not so easy. You come with certain expectations. You see and learn certain things and are able to give readymade answers to westerners. But even in India seventy-five per cent of the Hindu population are not able to answer the question: 'What is Vedanta?'

Many of them have not even heard the word Vedanta. They know only the word Hinduism. They worship the Divine Mother; Shiva, the god of renunciation and spiritual practices; and Krishna, the god incarnate who taught the message of non-attachment. They take their baths in the Ganges in northern India, in the sacred river, Godavari, in the east, in the river Cauvery in the south or in the river

Narmada in the west. Along with this, they do other spiritual practices, and their spiritual thirst is satisfied. Their spiritual questionings are answered. They do not bother about the source of spiritual problems nor about what Vedanta is. Nor can they be criticised for this. They do their religion in practice. They do not care, nor is it necessary for them to know the whys and wherefores.

In constructing, let us say a bridge, it is absolutely necessary that the chief engineer and his assistants know the theory of bridge-building. They must be able to formulate plans and know why certain details have to be done, but the ordinary worker does not have to understand all these details. He goes about his work and the bridge is built.

In practical religious life also, many Hindus may follow the teaching without knowing the background. They are busy with their spiritual practices, unaware that various systems of Hindu religion have come from Vedanta. It is those who have historical minds or scholastic tendencies and an intellectual outlook who want to know the source—What is Vedanta?

As a matter of fact, the word Hinduism is a misnomer. The correct word is Veda or Vedanta. Vedanta is that portion of the Vedas called Upanishads. Upanishads are the source literature. They embody the experiences of many sages, saints, and seers. Seers are those who have literally seen religion. They have perceived and realised religion as tangibly, as clearly and definitely, as when we see an object in an optical way. Vedanta does not depend on any one particular seer or prophet. The period during which the Upanishads were set down covers perhaps a thousand years or more. Because of this, there is no possibility that the whole religion might fall apart if it should be proved that some certain prophet never lived.

When we see scriptures, which embody the experiences of many persons, we naturally ask: ‘What is the underlying philosophy?’ From various experiences, we could likely derive various conclusions. And in the Upanishads, there are, it would seem, different conclusions. Ordinary people, people who have not had these highest experiences, often find the Upanishads hard to understand. Certain verses can be very confusing. A great sage, Badarayana, realised this and systematised these Upanishadic experiences in the form of aphorisms. These aphorisms have come down to us as the Vedanta philosophy.

In India, religion, the spiritual experiences, came first; philosophy came second. That is the logical sequence. The goal of philosophy is to know Truth and the nature of Truth, but we cannot understand the nature of Truth by simply intellectual effort. You cannot have spiritual experiences with your intellect. Spiritual knowledge comes by spiritual efforts, and spiritual efforts are quite different from intellectual efforts. So, in the Upanishadic age, we find that saints were not busy with just philosophical speculation. They went straight to the heart of the problems of the meaning of life: What is the ultimate Reality? What is the goal of human activity? And so on. What is more, they succeeded in solving those problems. It is their experiences in this spiritual search, which are in the Upanishads. The philosophy was then developed to satisfy the intellectual doubts of people, who have not had those experiences. This is philosophy’s great value.

Yet even Vedanta philosophy, however brilliant, is not able to satisfy ordinary individuals. Ordinary people do not care for philosophy. They have neither the time nor the capability to understand philosophical jargon. They want to know how to solve the problems of life and this cannot be done through

philosophy. Nor are the highest experiences of sages and saints of immediate value to them. As people grow in spiritual stature, as they evolve spiritually, they do come to understand the value of those experiences. But at first, there are many things which, however rich a heritage to some, are for others a source of misunderstanding. Thus, besides the Upanishads and the Vedanta aphorisms, there arose the need for some other more accessible scripture. That scripture is the Bhagavadgita, the message of Sri Krishna given to Arjuna, his friend and disciple, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

It is said that the Gita contains the essence of the Upanishads. There is one verse in a hymn to the Gita, which states very graphically that the Upanishads are like cows and that the Gita is the milk of these cows. Because of its simple and explicit language, the Gita *is* like milk in that it gives spiritual nourishment to those, who might not easily comprehend the Upanishads. Therefore, the Gita is the most popular scripture among Hindus in India—even children read it. Many read the Gita daily as a spiritual study. Vedanta literature, then, is the Upanishads, the aphorisms of Vedanta or Vedanta philosophy, and the Gita.

Vedanta came to the West in the first part of the nineteenth century. It is strange but it did not come through any Sanskrit scholar but through a Latin translation of a Persian translation of the Upanishads. These Sanskrit Upanishads were translated into Persian by a Mohammedan ruler, Muhammad Dara Shikoh, who was the son of Shah Jahan, builder of the famous Taj Mahal in Agra. His brother, Aurangzeb, the most oppressive Mogul emperor, killed him finally because of his interest in Indian philosophy. But his translation remains as his great glory. This was in the seventeenth century. These Persian Upanishads were subsequently translated into

Latin by a Frenchman, Anquetil-Duperron, and published in the years 1801 and 1802. From this Latin translation, Schopenhauer got a glimpse of Vedanta. He was so impressed by Upanishadic philosophy that he said: 'It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death.'<sup>2</sup>

The first English translation was undertaken in 1832 by the great social and religious reformer, Ram Mohan Roy, founder of the Brahmo Samaj—a protestant movement of Hinduism. This was followed by various English translations, and nowadays many are being made.

There is a distinction between Vedanta as philosophy and Vedanta as religion. The philosophy satisfies intellect, but the religion fills practical spiritual needs. It was in 1893 that Vedanta as a religion was brought to the West, and first to America by Swami Vivekananda.

Now what are the problems discussed in Vedanta as philosophy, and what are the problems solved by Vedanta as religion? The problems are the problems with which we have been faced from eternity in the past, and with which, perhaps, we will be faced for eternity in the future. What is the ultimate Reality? In a universe where everything is changing, is there anything permanent—is there anything eternal? Have we any individuality, or do we come from darkness and go back into darkness?

The tendency in modern times is to say: 'Don't talk of other-worldliness; it is no-worldliness. We have no past or future; so how can there be real existence without past or future?' Yet people continue to ask: 'Where do we come from; where do we go? What are we? If it is possible to know what we are, then what are the methods for knowing?'

Fortunately for us, answers to these questions are given in the Upanishads. They are given very directly without the slightest equivocation, in clear, unambiguous terms, and in such a rational



way that we do not have to believe anything; we can see from direct evidence.

The experience of the Upanishadic seers show that ultimate Reality *can* be seen, *can* be realised. Moreover, they say that unless this Reality is seen or realised, speculations about the ultimate goal and its nature have no real value in helping us to reach it.

One saint said:

I have known that Truth, I have known that ancient Being for which the whole of humanity was searching. I have known that ancient One. Let this thought be known to all, known to all who are on this earth and to all those who live, if they live at all, beyond this earth. All ye, ye are the children of bliss. All those who live in the invisible worlds, know for certain that I have known that Truth, have known that ultimate Reality.<sup>3</sup>

From the very expression, the way in which these words have been put down, one can feel that they could have been uttered only by a person who had known the Truth directly. In the original Sanskrit, it is even more emphatic.

Another sage said: 'I have known that Truth, I have known that supreme Being who is illumination itself, who is light effulgent, I have known that Being by knowing which one goes beyond all darkness, beyond all ignorance' (3.1.8). In one verse we find: 'When one has known that Truth, how can misery touch you? How can even physical ailments bother you? That is the only way to attain bliss.'<sup>4</sup>

There are many similar expressions by these seers whose names we do not know. Nor do we need to know their names; we know their spirits. Their verses are great spiritual heritage for all of humanity. They have been handed down from generation to generation for all coming generations.

Philosophically speaking, though, what

is the nature of this ultimate Reality? And what is the relationship between the ultimate Reality and us ordinary mortals? This is the important question.

It has been answered in a very beautiful way: wherever there are two things, there is behind them something else, which is their cause. Thus, the ultimate Reality is oneness. It is a oneness not bound by any geographical conception. It has neither breadth, length, nor thickness. It is non-material and infinite. Since it is infinite, it pervades the infinite universe, which we see, as well as the universe we do not see. It is like the moon which, reflected on the disturbed surface of a lake, is seen as various moons. In the same way, there is one ultimate Reality which is seen as different individuals. In fact, we ourselves are not different from the ultimate Reality. It is because our ignorance and disturbed minds do not allow us to think intensely or one-pointedly that we see ourselves as various individuals. Nevertheless, our essential being is divine. It is spiritual essence, and spiritual essence is divine essence. Each individual, the vilest person in the world or the greatest saint, has within oneself the same divine essence. A saint has simply manifested the divinity, which is as yet hidden within the criminal. From this standpoint, we are all equal.

From another standpoint, we can come to the same conclusion that there is this divine essence in each of us. Daily we pass through three states. In our waking state, we see certain things and hear certain things. We have feelings, feelings of fear, of joy, of hatred. These same feelings are reflected in the state of our dreams. That there is a connecting link between the waking state and the dream state is known by the fact that we remember many things from our waking state in our dreams although not often tangibly or clearly. Besides wakefulness and dreams, there is deep sleep. In this state we do not see

anything, we do not hear anything; it is a state of perfect rest. Now, what is it that these three states have in common? The Upanishadic sages say that in these three states something exists, which sees everything but which is itself unseen. That something is our real nature, our spiritual essence or Self.

From still another angle, we can deduce this Self. We say we are human bodies, but what are human bodies? They are composed of flesh and bones, senses, and in a more subtle way, of mind and intellect. In Vedanta, a distinction is made between mind and intellect. When we weigh whether a thing is right or wrong, we say that this is the function of the mind. Making a definite decision about that thing is the function of intellect. Behind both our gross bodies and our mind and intellect, there is also something. When we say, 'my hand', we use two words, 'my' and 'hand'. We are separate from the hand; otherwise, we could not say, 'my hand'. We would say, 'I am hand'. It is usual to identify ourselves with our mind, but when we say, 'my mind', we give evidence that there is something behind this mind. In referring to 'my intellect', we go deeper still, indicating that there is something behind even the intellect with which we are equating ourselves. Take the illustration of the echo. When we hear the sound of an echo, we take for granted that there is something, which is causing it. Similarly, when we hear a melody played on a flute, we may not see the flute player, but we know that the flute player exists. In the same way Vedanta analyses: 'I am not the body; I am not the mind; I am not the intellect. There is something behind all these, which is my Real Existence.'

Now is this 'real Existence' simply an abstraction? Is it a mere void as many people would claim? Is this goal of Vedanta, this 'real Existence', nothing but emptiness, or is it

something more? By intellectual conjectures, it is foolish to try to reach an answer to this question. We must go to the experiences of those who have reached that goal. We find without exception that these persons say that real Existence is full of joy and bliss.

So Vedanta says that ultimate Reality is absolute Existence, absolute Knowledge, and absolute Bliss. Being absolute, there is no loss or imperfection. Once we have known it, we can never lose it. It is nothing like book knowledge, which can be learned and then forgotten. Therefore, it is called absolute Knowledge, the source of all knowledge. Since there is no change of any kind in that Existence, it is also called absolute Existence. Those who have experienced that state of absolute Knowledge and absolute Existence say that there is a fullness of experience which is absolute Bliss. One Upanishad affirms that however miserable we might be in this world, the source of our being is joy and that from this source, from joy, the world has come into being. The world is sustained by that joy, and to that joy, we go again at the end of the period of our darkness.<sup>5</sup>

One can only describe that real Existence as a state of great bliss. Words fail to express it. It is such an intense joy that it cannot be described. Some of the Upanishads say this. Even thought, ordinary thought, does not go there. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Everything has been defiled, but the experience of Brahman, the highest experience, has not been defiled. We have not been able to speak of this experience to others.'<sup>6</sup>

An ordinary illustration can be made. Suppose we taste a certain food. How can we adequately express that taste to a person who has not tasted that food for oneself? We cannot, words fall short. In the same way but infinitely more so, we cannot express the great joy,

which is felt at the time of the highest spiritual experience. But because we cannot understand that experience or reach it for ourselves as yet, does not infer that it is illusory or that it is a state of void and emptiness.

So far we have been speaking only of monism, the oneness of the ultimate Reality. To some extent, Vedanta has been identified with this system of religion and philosophy—Oneness—because thousands of commentaries have been written on the Upanishads from that standpoint. Also, this monistic philosophy is the only philosophy that can satisfactorily explain the universe and its true nature.

In ordinary dualistic religion, we meet the idea of an all-loving, kind God, who created the universe. This is the God to whom most people go to in a church or temple to pray. But if one thinks boldly, without any fear or prejudice, if one asks oneself the question, 'If God is so all-loving, why are there miseries in the world?', one would not be able to give an adequate answer.

Why is there suffering in the world? Let us take Christian theology. God created Adam and Eve and forbade them to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Nevertheless, they did eat it. Who, then, is responsible? If Adam is responsible, why did a loving God make him so weak that he succumbed to the temptation of Satan? Who can answer that question and maintain the idea of a kind and all-loving God? Dualistic religion, which holds that God created earth, where there are individuals, cannot give a plausible answer to that question either. In India also, dualistic philosophy would say, 'It is the will of God. It is the all-powerful power of God', and so on. But Advaita philosophy, the monistic philosophy of Vedanta, states that there is Oneness behind this universe, but because of our disturbed condition of mind this Oneness appears as

many, just as one moon, when reflected in different waves of the ocean, becomes many varied moons. Thus, dualism and all forms of religion can be explained.

But, we may ask, where is the place of God? It is something like this: We cannot look at the sun with the naked eye, but if we hold up a coloured glass, we can see it. In a similar way, we look at the Absolute through the coloured glass of the human mind and emotion and call it God. God is an image of the human mind. We create God with our imagination. But because we create God with our mind, it does not follow that God does not exist any more than because we cannot look at the sun with our naked eyes means that the sun does not exist. We simply require a coloured glass. The personal God is as true as we, human beings, are true. God is as true as the absolute Oneness is true. So long as we think that we are human beings, there is a God for us, a God to whom we can pray, to whom we can go in times of tribulation and from whom we can get relief. There is no denying the fact; we do get relief. But if we want to prove intellectually that our reading of the Absolute, our personal God exists, we cannot. We must go directly to the concept of the impersonal Absolute, which we cannot see or sense.

Now, what are the methods of realising the Absolute? Fortunately again, we can learn from the experiences of those saints, who have shown the way for everyone, but we must be cautious. If a person says, 'I know this Existence, and therefore you are inferior, I talk from the mountaintop where you will never reach', then there is something wrong with his teaching. We find the Upanishadic seers take an impersonal attitude: 'We had that experience and want to share it with all; we lived those experiences for others. Those who are in this world, those who are in the world we do not see, let them know




that these experiences can be the property of all human beings.' By their own rational and impersonal words, they affirm that we can also realise that state. Their method for realisation is also very rational—we hear, we discuss, we try intellectually to understand that here is an Absolute and that because of our ignorance the world has come into being.

Every religion says that God is all-pervading. If God is all-pervading, where is the existence of this earth? Why do we see the solid ground? It is our ignorance. We do not see Reality. Even science says that matter is nothing. Matter fades into energy or spirit. Though matter is non-material, in the last analysis, we still feel that matter is material, substantial, and solid. That is our mistake, our ignorance. We have to remove this ignorance. But how?

Find out what matter is. By analysing and discriminating, we discover that matter changes; it is not the same as that which we see. Try to meditate. By meditation, we increase the power of concentration, the power to think boldly, intensely. We strengthen the mind, and when the meditation is strong enough, deep enough, when the mind is perfectly concentrated, when there is no disturbance on the 'surface of the lake', we see only one 'moon'. The light of Truth flashes in our mind when the mind has become absolutely calm and tranquil.

Vedanta appeals to a modern mind because it is very impersonal; it is universal. Truth is universal. Also, Vedanta is very optimistic. It appeals to the healthy-minded person who does not think that one is miserable. We do not have to go to religion through the fear of hell or the allurements of the heavens. It is enough to try to find out the nature of this universe. This is a healthy-minded attitude towards life, death, and all problems of the universe.

It is said that Vedanta is the bread of the

strong. We do not need the fear of hell or the fear that we are all sinful persons. On the other hand, we do not say: 'Don't have any negative ideas, Don't admit that there are difficulties in the world or that a thing is bad, for then it becomes bad.' Vedanta starts by saying that the world is a mixture of good and bad, and we must face it. Vedanta begins in pessimism and ends in optimism. We cannot deny wars, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or any other evils in the world. Nevertheless, there is a way out. Vedanta says: 'Yes, we commit mistakes, deplorable mistakes sometimes, but that is due to our ignorance. We are not damned eternally to perdition. If we make a mistake, we must consider it as such and stand up and try to correct it.' This is indeed food for the healthy-minded; it leads to optimism, for only those who are optimistic can follow the precepts of Vedanta and finally reach the goal. Though now there is delusion and illusion, though there are misery and suffering, once a person has seen the one all-pervading Presence throughout the whole universe, one becomes the recipient of permanent and changeless bliss. That is the goal of Vedanta. That is Vedanta. 

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# Sri Ramakrishna and the Bodhisattva Ideal

Swami Kritarthananda

## Be Ye Like A Banyan Tree

**S**RI RAMAKRISHNA once made an epochal remark in his advice to Narendranath. When the latter badgered him persistently for a state of complete absorption in God for days together, he reproached: 'Fie upon you! I thought you would be like a huge banyan tree under the cool shade of which many a tired traveller of life will find rest and peace. No, my boy, there are higher stages than what you crave for (samadhi). Don't you sing, "Thou art whatever exists"?'

This was not the only occasion when we find such an aspect of Sri Ramakrishna. A keen reader of the life and gospel of the great Master will find such pregnant ideas gushing forth in streams from him whenever occasion demanded. A few days before his final departure, he implored Sri Sarada Devi: 'Would you not do anything, dear?' The latter dithered: 'What can I, a helpless woman, do?' To that Sri Ramakrishna retorted: 'Oh no! You will have to do much more than what this body has done. The people of Calcutta are wallowing like insects in the mire of the world. You must look after their welfare.'

Long before the devotees started flocking around him, Sri Ramakrishna, after achieving the consummation of all spiritual paths, felt an indomitable desire within, and would go to the terrace of the office building in Dakshineswar to call aloud at the top of his voice: 'Come, all ye! I have been waiting for you.' It seemed he could tarry no more to distribute at large whatever he had earned in the course of his spiritual struggle. What force impelled him to do good

to the world voluntarily? What prodded him to train a band of people to sacrifice their lives for a noble cause, namely, doing good to others as a way of achieving freedom for oneself as well as for others?

Indeed, it was a radically new ideal embroidered on the warp and weft of the modern religious thought that Sri Ramakrishna seamed. This ideal contained the best elements of all the then-extant philosophies of the world. Such a beautifully proportionate blend was done only once before in the religious annals of India—during the regime of Sri Krishna.

Today we all remember Sri Ramakrishna as the harmoniser of religions. But very few among us have a clear idea of how he effected this feat. To know this, we have to discuss here some of the less-known views of Advaita philosophy as also some remarkable features of some other contemporary religious philosophies of India. An avatara like Sri Ramakrishna comes not to destroy or throw away anything already established by the earlier prophets. He built up a unique philosophy befitting the present age by translating in his own life all the best aspects of different religions, some of which were on the verge of being lost due to neglect or misunderstanding. Within our limited scope here we shall focus our attention mainly on two lesser-known aspects to suit the present context. One is the Bodhisattva ideal and the other is the *sarvamukti* ideal, meaning the liberation of all. These two have come to bear upon the spirit of serving God in all with an attitude of worship in a great measure.

### The Bodhisattva Ideal

The Bodhisattva forms almost a core doctrine in Mahayana Buddhism, so much so that the latter is also known as the Bodhisattva-*yana*. The word 'Bodhisattva' literally means the essence, *sattva*, of wisdom or supreme intelligence, *bodhi*. It is a state, compared to the threshold of a house, from which both the inside and the outside can be seen. Here inside means the phenomenal universe while the outside is the super-conscious existence.

The second point is that the Bodhisattva state is one of perfect balance between the faculties of the head and the heart. The essential nature of Bodhisattva is a great loving heart and all sentient beings constitute the object of the Bodhisattva's love. Kenneth Saunders describes the characteristics of a Bodhisattva in the following way in his *Epochs in Buddhist History*: 'Charming, gentle, and compassionate, full of tender and affectionate thought, unbiased, serene, he is zealous, and ever girded for the duties of his high calling, and has no thought that is not pure and wise. He rouses others to good deeds.'<sup>1</sup>

One of the outstanding characteristics of a Bodhisattva is the eagerness for vicarious salvation. A Bodhisattva is ready to give up one's own salvation if thereby others can be helped to get salvation. A Bodhisattva is ready to exchange others' sins for one's own merits. This fact points to the superhuman courage that a Bodhisattva possesses.

The Bodhisattva ideal originated in India and got further fostered, developed, and popularised in China, in Judo school; and Japan, in Honen and Shinran Shonin school. There are ten steps in the staircase leading to the Bodhisattva stage. Of these, the initial three known as *danaparamita*, *shilaparamita*, and *kshantiparamita*, are meant for moral and ethical practices that form the basis of all spiritual aspirations. The word *paramita* in Buddhism has the

same meaning as the Sanskrit word *parakashtha*, meaning the extreme limit. In the fourth plane, known as *virya-paramita*, the aspirant continues in one's practice with enthusiasm. The fifth level, known as *dhyana-paramita*, is meant for the practice of meditation.

In the next stage, the aspirant is directed for *prajna-paramita*. At this stage, the aspirant gains the knowledge of the real nature of the objective world and its cause-effect network in the right perspective. This is an intermediary level between the temporal and liberated stages. The seventh plane opens the gate to the non-dual realisation. The aspirant acquires enormous qualities of an enlightened person, the Buddha. This is the consummation of all spiritual practices.

Hereafter the aspirant, Bodhisattva, may merge oneself in nirvana, the cessation of all mundane bondages, that is, liberation. But the Bodhisattva's desire to do good to all refrains one from entering the citadel of nirvana for oneself alone. So the Bodhisattva continues in one's journey and reaches the eighth stage to attain the power of forbearance. The Bodhisattva at this level goes beyond all taints of karma. Moreover, all the previously enlightened ones appear before the Bodhisattva and open their store of inexhaustible wisdom. It is by virtue of this wisdom that the Bodhisattva earns the capacity to do good to others.

One point may be noted from this in passing; without acquiring the right knowledge, one cannot do good to others effectively. Here again, one gains the capacity to control others. Next, the Bodhisattva ascends the ninth stage where the powers due to knowledge and work and many kinds of samadhi come to one's possession. In the tenth or final stage, the Bodhisattva becomes endowed with a resplendent body, emitting divine rays in all directions. These divine rays bring cessation to all miseries of living beings.

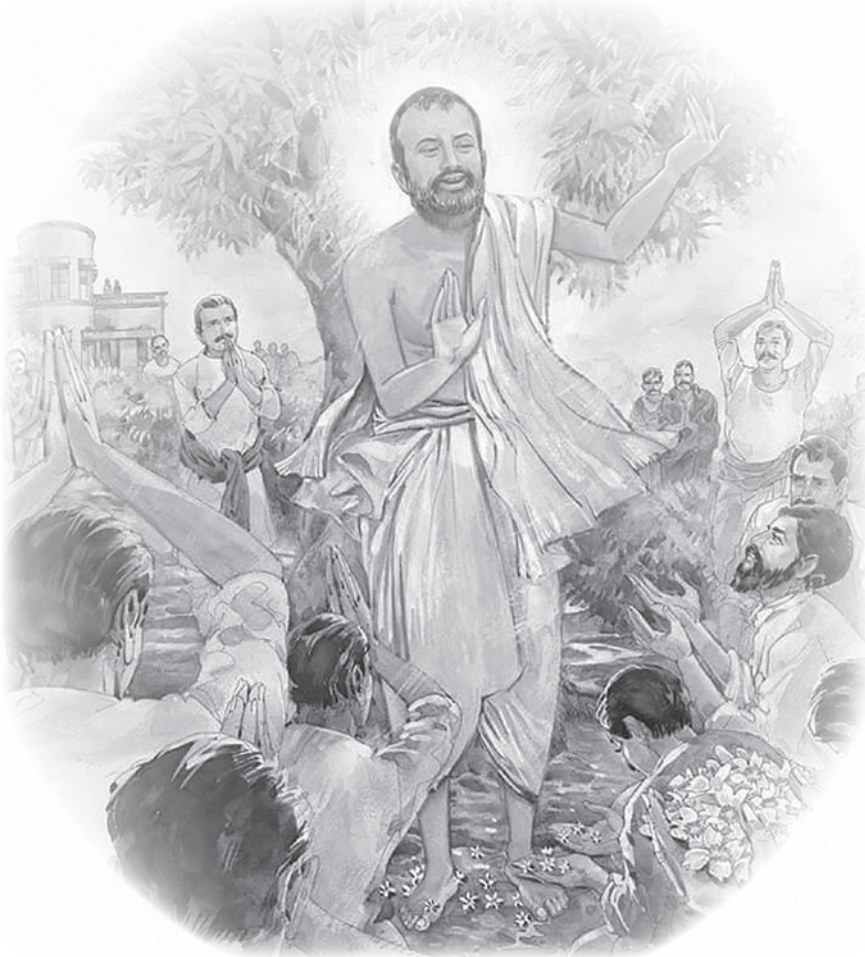


Thus the Bodhisattva is a person, who does not seek to escape from the cycle of transmigration into nirvana, but realising the essential unity of the cycle and nirvana, continues to live in the cycle for the enlightenment of all other beings. The Bodhisattva feels that one cannot enjoy eternal bliss while other beings suffer because the Bodhisattva knows that there is no essential difference between them and oneself.

For the Bodhisattva personal nirvana is vanity and selfishness as long as a single creature remains unenlightened. This profound principle points to the fact that the finite and the infinite, the secular and the spiritual, the mundane and the cosmic, are not incompatible. To put it in the

Hindu philosophic terms, the immanent and the transcendent are just two perspectives of the same truth. The *Lankavatara Sutra* has gone a step further in boldly proclaiming that there 'is no Nirvana except where is Samsara; there is no Samsara except where is Nirvana; for the condition of existence is not of a mutually exclusive character'.<sup>2</sup> When Swami Vivekananda advised his disciples to have equal enthusiasm in meditation and work, he had this point in view. We shall come to that context later.

The long and short of it is that the infinite can be worshipped only through the finite, and not to the complete exclusion of it. The *Ishavasya Upanishad* vouches for this truth



clearly in the following mantras: 'To darkness are they doomed who worship only the body, and to greater darkness they who worship only the spirit. Worship of the body [the finite] alone leads to one result, worship of the spirit [the infinite] leads to another. So have we heard from the wise. They who worship both the body and the spirit, by the body overcome death, and by the spirit achieve immortality.'<sup>3</sup>

What Sri Ramakrishna used to call *bhavamukha*, *ishvarakoti*, and avatara bear a striking semblance to this Bodhisattva state. The following simile will clarify the point in question:

Take the case of a man who stands by a wall on both sides of which there are meadows stretching to infinity. If there is a hole in the wall, through it he can see everything on the other side. If the hole is a big one, he can even pass through it. The ego of the Incarnations and other Isvarakotis is like the wall with a hole. Though they remain on this side of the wall, still they can see the endless meadow on the other side. That is to say, though they have a human body, they are always united with God. Again, if they will, they can pass through the big hole to the other side and remain in samadhi. And if the hole is big enough, they can go through it and come back again. That is to say, though established in samadhi, they can again descend to the worldly plane.<sup>4</sup>

### Sarvamukti Ideal

According to Appayya Dikshita, there were a number of schools of Advaita philosophy. Of these, only the Vivarana school advocated the view of *sarvamukti*. The word does not imply that all the souls will be liberated together on a fine morning. As a matter of fact, every individual soul, after getting enlightenment, attains oneness with *saguna* Brahman, meaning, personal God. The soul then goes on leading one's own exemplary divine life while maintaining an

attitude of benevolence towards others. Such a soul is said to have attained the state of *ishvara*. Even after the dissolution of the body, one does not get complete liberation but continues to live in a particular region of transcendental existence. From there one may at times come back to temporal existence with a view to helping others get liberation. But this descent is not comparable with the usual transmigratory existence of the common run of individuals who take birth according to the inexorable law of karma.

Professor M Hiriyanna has pointed out that this *sarvamukti* theory does not admit of a complete individual perfection so long as the other bodies in the system continue to be imperfect. Here we have to bring in the name of a less-known pre-Shankara Advaita philosopher who was one of the supporters of the *sarvamukti* ideal. His name was Bhartriprapancha. He lived a couple of centuries before Acharya Shankara, and is known as an interpreter of the Upanishads like *Brihadaranyaka*, *Katha*, *Isha*, and possibly of the *Brahma Sutra*. Even Acharya Shankara in his commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* has referred to Bhartriprapancha's views, though refuting them. Both of them held the view that non-dualism was the ultimate teaching of the Upanishads.

But while Acharya Shankara differentiated between the two states of Brahman, namely, the absolute, *para*, and the relative, *apara*, calling the latter an appearance, Bhartriprapancha held them both as equally real. This theory is known as *bhedabhedavada*. Again, whereas Acharya Shankara restricted the scope of the Upanishads within the concept of unity alone, Bhartriprapancha promoted the concept of unity in diversity, *dvaitadvaita* in the Upanishads. He also felt it necessary to coordinate *jnana*, knowledge, with karma, ritual work, on the way to attain moksha, liberation. Some other views of

this great savant need mention in the present context. Those unique views will help us to link Sri Ramakrishna's significant views direct to the Advaita foundation.

First, Bhartriprapancha holds that genuine indifference to worldly objects comes as a matter of course through some kind of actual experience. This 'some kind' is prescribed in the Upanishads as a conscious participation in universal life. This is called *apavarga*, liberation from mundane existence, through *bhoga*, actual experience.

Second, Bhartriprapancha recognised the variety of the universe in eight modes or *avasthas* of Brahman. They are: *antaryamin*, *sakshin*, *avyakrita*, *sutra*, *viraj*, *devata*, *jati*, and *pinda*. These eight can be broadly subdivided into two distinct aspects, namely, the spiritual, first two, and the secular, the remaining.

From the above discussion on the two concepts, namely, the Bodhisattva and *sarvamukti*, two points get clarified. First, the Bodhisattva ideal shares some common features with at least some schools of pre-Shankara Advaita philosophy. Second, the *sarvamukti* ideal as expressed in Buddhism is not altogether alien to Hindu philosophy. These two points are important, for, as we shall see shortly, Sri Ramakrishna in the modern era utilised these two features in propounding a wonderful and unprecedented work of philosophy that is as deep as a stream in its Advaitic depth, as it is broad in its humanness and love for humanity.

### **Sri Ramakrishna's Synthesis**

It needs no mention that one of the main contributions of Sri Ramakrishna to the world is the harmony of all religions. In brief, this harmony is based on several facts. First, the goal of all religions is the same, namely, to realise God, Truth, or perfection. Second, the essential elements of all the paths lead to the well being of humanity.

That religion which does not cater to the welfare of people will perish in no time like water drops in a hot pan. Third, all religious paths are equally true and valid. Hence, no question arises as to the survival of one to the exclusion of others. This idea was tersely clarified later by Swamiji in his concluding address at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago in 1893: 'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.'<sup>5</sup>

This statement points to the peaceful coexistence of all religions in a multi-religious world. The fourth implication is that there are, in all religions, elevated personalities of divine stature. So, however defective a religion may look in the eyes of the common person, its need should not be undermined. As a fifth implication, the harmony of religions leads to mutual enrichment through sympathy and right understanding. Interfaith dialogues enable us to dive deep into the essence of religions, leaving aside the sheath or chaff. Most people engross themselves in the external observances and customs of religions. But these are merely the external, the 'skin' of a fruit, and not its delicious pulp. Besides, these observances vary according to time, place, and individual.

Sri Ramakrishna never had any intention of harmonising religions. After he attained perfection in one path, he felt an irrepressible desire within to taste the same bliss from different perspectives. To him, it was all a divine play of the Mother. Through his punctilious adherence to every minute detail of some of the chief religious paths, he attained to a perfection in each of them and at last realised the truth that, like an affectionate mother preparing various dishes out of the same constituents in order to suit the

stomach of each member of the family, God has made various provisions for people of different temperaments. Hence, all dissension over religions is meaningless.

There is no evidence of Sri Ramakrishna following the disciplines of Buddhism, but from his own statements in the *Gospel*, we come to know that he had a deep reverence for Gautama Buddha. He spoke highly of the Buddha, refuting others' allegation that the latter was an agnostic. Moreover, there is much likelihood that he was highly impressed by the Bodhisattva ideal. By dint of his irresistible spiritual potential, he attained the non-dual unity of Vedanta and remained in that state continuously for six months—an unprecedented episode in religious annals. But an inscrutable power brought him down to the normal plane of existence. Thereafter, he received a command from the High to remain in *bhavamukha*, a state already described here. This was the starting point of his divine mission.

Noble souls like Sri Ramakrishna come not to destroy but to build up. Even those paths of tantric disciplines that were berated by others for the immoral practices associated with them were held in good esteem by Sri Ramakrishna with the remark: 'There are various ways to reach God. Some of these are dirty like the scavenger's entrance to a house. It is really better to enter the house by the front door.'<sup>6</sup>

Acharya Shankara had to release pure Advaita philosophy from the clutches of Buddhism. So he had to defeat his Buddhist opponents in scriptural debate. As per the local custom prevalent in his era, the defeated had to embrace the winner's philosophy or perish. Thus, Acharya Shankara succeeded in converting a good number of Buddhist savants into his way of thought. But that could not strip Buddhism of its essential and humanitarian elements.

We have already seen that the Bodhisattva ideal chiefly held by the Mahayana Buddhists and the *sarvamukti* ideal held by some pre-Shankara Advaita philosophers of the Vivarana school have striking similarities. This means that the former ideal was not alien to Hindu thought. Sri Ramakrishna, either through his spiritual intuition or through a divine dispensation, felt an intense desire to apply this important element to the welfare of people at large. So, in order to bring about an all-round development of the human race, he did not stop merely by creating a covey of monastic disciples to carry his wonderful humanitarian message to the people; he also set his mind to give the ideal of householder a new dimension. Ideal monks will be born only when common people start living the lives of ideal householders. Besides, he left a number of dedicated women disciples including his own wife to ameliorate the condition of women. In order to improve a race, both the sexes must strive hand in hand for upliftment.

We remember with great reverence his refusal to leave a group of poor, ill-nourished, and famished villagers of the Vaidyanath Dhama before each of them were well-fed and properly clad. This he did with sternness, in the face of strong opposition from the leader of the pilgrimage, Mathuranath. It was not his soft emotion that came into play at the sight of misery; it was a feeling of identity born of Advaitic realisation and the heart of a Bodhisattva, who is ready to sacrifice his all for the common weal, who is ready to return love for hate, virtue for vice, happiness and peace for misery. The unmitigated Advaita ideal may render one devoid of any feeling for others. On the other hand, an excess of emotional outburst as found in the dualistic philosophies runs the risk of degrading and even corrupting a person. A balance between the two was badly needed for the present age. That is



precisely what Sri Ramakrishna did in his process of synthesis.

Another point needs particular mention here. Sri Ramakrishna had told that after the realisation of God, when the aspirant comes down to the normal plane of consciousness by a reverse process called *viloma*, one finds that this world is made up of the same element as that of Brahman. He exemplified it by citing the example of a terrace and a staircase, both made of the same elements of cement, lime, brick, and the like. He named this realisation as *vijnana*. This view is not accepted by the orthodox schools of Advaita Vedanta. Though Buddhism has a theory called *vijnanavada*, it has no similarity with what Sri Ramakrishna said. Again, some people trace this aforesaid concept of *vijnana* to the Vishishtadvaita school of Ramanuja. This is also not fully correct. Whatever name may be ascribed to it, the state of a *vijnani* as placed by Sri Ramakrishna is purely an Advaitic view in a modified form. And as an outcome of this view, one is propelled by the desire to do good to the world.

In the present age, work has become an indispensable part of human life. One has to earn one's living through work. Again, it is work that connects each individual to the world. In other words, the relationship between a person and the world can be established only through work. And it is a beautiful element of Advaita philosophy that it holds that the relative and the absolute, secular and spiritual are one and the same from the non-dual perspective. This wonderful idea gives rise to a new hope that by spiritualising our work, by changing our attitude to work, we can also have spiritual realisation.

Another story told by Sri Ramakrishna illustrates the Bodhisattva ideal more than anything else: 'There was an infinite field beyond a high wall. Four friends tried to find out what was beyond the wall. Three of them, one after the other,

climbed the wall, saw the field, burst into loud laughter, and dropped to the other side. These three could not give any information about the field. Only the fourth man came back and told people about it. He is like those who retain their bodies, even after attaining Brahmajnana, in order to teach others.'<sup>7</sup>

### **Implementation by Swami Vivekananda**

It is not that Sri Ramakrishna followed the Bodhisattva ideal in toto. He rather made a wonderful synthesis between the Bodhisattva of Buddhism and the Sarvamukti of the Advaita schools and made the blend suitable for the present age and a path to enhance the collective liberation of all. Swamiji took this cue from Sri Ramakrishna and scattered it broadcast all over the world. Whereas Buddha preached the motto of '*bahujana-hitaya, bahujana-sukhaya cha*; for the welfare of the many and for the happiness of many', Swamiji placed a unique motto for the monks of the Ramakrishna Order: '*atmano mokshartham jagad hitaya cha*; for one's own liberation as also for the welfare of the world simultaneously'.

When he founded the Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May 1897, immediately after his triumphant return from the West, Swamiji put this motto as the ideal before the monks. Again, before leaving for the West a second time in June 1899, he said in an address to the monks:

To go ahead of others in salvation is wrong. One must learn sooner or later than one cannot get salvation if one does not try to seek the salvation of his brothers. You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields ... You must be prepared to explain the difficult intricacies of the Shastras now, and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market. You must be prepared

for all menial services, not only here, but elsewhere also.<sup>8</sup>


Sri Ramakrishna sometimes compared avatars to a ship or a huge vessel that can carry many people across an ocean. The Sanskrit word for a vessel is *yana*, and the words 'Mahayana' and 'Hinayana' in Buddhism point to the same meaning of two types of vessel that carries many souls across the ocean of life to salvation. Swamiji also mentioned this idea in three of his lectures in India. The appeal was so strong that it cannot but move the hearts of people even after a long gap of a century. Said he in his touching style:

This national ship, my countrymen, my friends, my children—this national ship has been ferrying million and millions of souls across the waters of life. For scores of shining centuries it has been plying across this water, and through its agency, millions of souls have been taken to the other shore, to blessedness. But today, perhaps through your own fault, this boat has become a little damaged, has sprung a leak; and would you therefore curse it? Is it fit that you stand up and pronounce malediction upon it, one that has done more work than any other thing in the world? If there are holes in this national ship, this society of ours, we are its children. Let us go and stop the holes. Let us gladly do it with our hearts' blood; and if we cannot, then let us die. We will make a plug of our brains and put them into the ship, but condemn it never. ... I have come to you, my children, to tell you all my plans. If you hear them I am ready to work with you. But if you will not listen to them, and even kick me out of India, I will come back and tell you that we are all sinking! I am come now to sit in your midst, and if we are to sink, let us all sink together, but never let curses rise to our lips (3.227).

When Swamiji returned to India from his Western mission in 1897 and founded the Ramakrishna organisation of monks with its

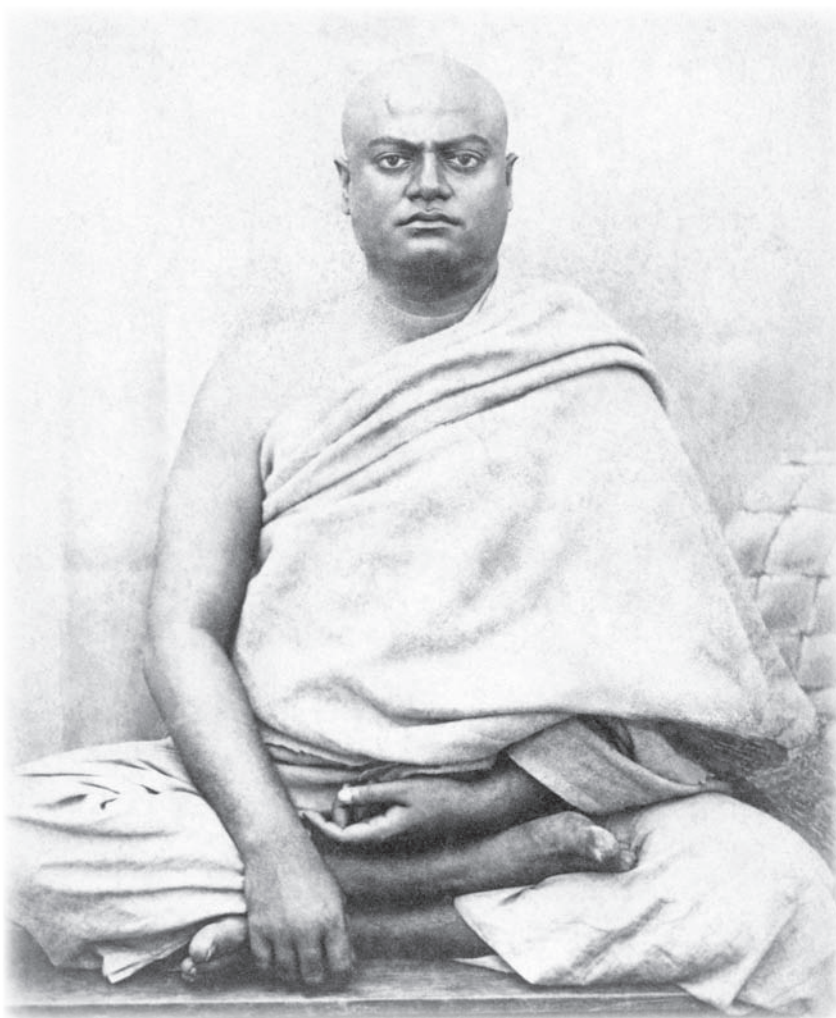
missionary schedule of activity, many brows were raised in suspicion. Even his brother-disciples protested against the proposal, alleging that Swamiji was influenced by the missionary zeal of the West.

Through another statement of Swamiji the Bodhisattva ideal reflects much more prominently than the other statements quoted above. He said: 'It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God' (5.414).

This is an ideal meant for each and every member of the Ramakrishna Order—not to care for one's own liberation until the whole world rediscovers its unity with God. For a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, however spiritually advanced, there is no question of personal liberation. One will have to come back, again and again, to work for the enlightenment of one's fellow brothers and sisters with renewed enthusiasm. 

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## ***Recontextualising Caste —An Analysis Based on Swami Vivekananda's Views and Postcolonial Ideology***

**Dr R Lekshmi and O Priya**

**T**HAT SWAMI VIVEKANANDA was a great visionary, seer, testifies to the fact that many of his teachings fit into the framework of

contemporary thought currents and movements. The penetrating insights of this great seer found spontaneous expressions from his encounter

with Truth that surpasses the finitude of space and time. He saw the human being as divine and therefore, he dealt with everything pertaining to his ontological being with utmost care and concern. His analysis of the social institution of caste is much scientific and humanistic and it stands on a par with the contemporary debates of the subaltern studies of postcolonialism.

The contention of this paper will of course be futile if Swamiji is found among the lines of the anti-foundationalists or anti-metaphysicians like the postmodernists or poststructuralists. Nevertheless, the parallels that one can draw between Swamiji and the contemporary postcolonialists on their views on marginalised sections of the society are worth discussing.

### **The Project of Postcolonialism**

The prefix 'post' in postcolonialism is ambivalent for it could signify a historical marker as well as a critique of colonialism. "The term postcolonial itself operates in at least two different registers at once: it is a historical marker referring to the period after decolonization as well as a term signifying alterations in intellectual approaches, particularly those which have been influenced by post-structuralism and deconstruction."<sup>1</sup>

[Postcolonialism] involves a conceptual reorientation towards the perspectives of knowledge, as well as needs, developed outside the West. ... It ... comprises a related set of perspectives ... involves issues ... to do with the position of women, of development, of ecology, of social justice, of socialism in its broadest sense. Above all, postcolonialism seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledge into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different peoples of the world. ... Its radical agenda is to demand equality and well-being for all human beings on this earth.<sup>2</sup>

Swamiji had an intimate knowledge of such Western movements as socialism, capitalism, and communism from their literature as well as from personal contacts. These movements were at that time in their infancy and even their propounders had no great hopes for the ideologies they advocated. Swamiji could see clearly the very purpose of the colonial rule of the British in India, the weaknesses and failures of the Indian mindset—along with their strength and triumph—and also the prototype of the contemporary ideology, postcolonialism, which very much echoes in his lectures on 'Modern India', 'A Plan of Work for India', and so on. It is remarkable to see that an orientalist as Swamiji prophesied at that distant date that "socialism of some form was coming on the boards" and that the Shudras as *Shudras* would be the future ruling caste.<sup>3</sup>

### **Caste: Indian Version of Institutionalised Inequality**

The Indian version of institutionalised inequality and indignity projects itself as the caste system with privileges for some and degradation for others. The pursuit of social justice is the primary objective of democracy. However, what we have today in the name of modernity and technological development is crony capitalism.

The link between colonialism and capitalism needs to be spelt out at this juncture. Ania Loomba notes 'that colonialism was the midwife that assisted at the birth of European capitalism.'<sup>4</sup> Swamiji's observations are worth quoting here:

The idea is being formed in the minds of the English public that the passing away of the Indian Empire from their sway will end in imminent peril to the English nation, and be their ruin. So, by any means whatsoever, the supremacy of England must be maintained in India. The way to effect this, they think, is by



keeping uppermost in the heart of every Indian the mighty prestige and glory of the British nation. It gives rise to both laughter and tears simultaneously to observe how this ludicrous and pitiful sentiment is gaining ground among the English, and how they are steadily extending their *modus operandi* for the carrying out of this sentiment into practice. It seems as if the Englishmen resident in India are forgetting that so long as that fortitude, that perseverance, and that intense national unity of purpose, by which Englishmen have earned this Indian Empire—and that ever wide-awake commercial genius aided by science, which has turned even India, the mother of all riches, into the principal mart of England—so long as these characteristics are not eliminated from their national life, their throne in India is unshakable.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting to analyse the above-mentioned quotation of Swamiji against the backdrop of contemporary postmodern thinkers. 'Postmodern theory in general rejects the modern equation of reason and freedom and attempts to problematize modern forms of rationality as reductive and oppressive. ... Foucault stigmatizes modern rationality, institutions, and forms of subjectivity as sources or constructs of domination.'<sup>6</sup> The Enlightenment project had disastrous consequences for the rest of the world because it glossed over and erased differences, even genuine and authentic ones, in a bid to ruthlessly homogenise and verify all systems under the banner of science and reason. As a result, the non-Westerners were seen as 'the other'—the unscientific and the irrational. Foucault argues that one 'of the Enlightenment's tasks was to multiply reason's political powers'.<sup>7</sup>

In the postcolonial India how we Indians measure progress is beautifully expressed by Swamiji:

The spell of imitating the West is getting such a strong hold upon you that what is good or what

is bad is no longer decided by reason, judgment, discrimination, or reference to the *Shastras*. Whatever ideas, whatever manners the white men praise or like are good; whatever things they dislike or censure are bad. ... O India! With this mere echoing of others, with this base imitation of others, with this dependence on others, this slavish weakness, this vile detestable cruelty—wouldst thou, with these provisions only, scale the highest pinnacle of civilisation and greatness? ... Say, brother: 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good'.<sup>8</sup>

It is a truism that postcolonialism 'resists all forms of exploitation (environmental as well as human) and all oppressive conditions that have been developed solely for the interests of corporate capitalism. ... It stands for empowering the poor, the dispossessed, and the disadvantaged, for tolerance of difference and diversity, for the establishment of minorities' rights, women's rights, and cultural rights within a broad framework of democratic egalitarianism'.<sup>9</sup> Swamiji was not much enamoured of a mere economic equality; he rather stood for a cultural and spiritual fraternity in which there would not only be economic socialism and political freedom, but also moral and intellectual kinship.

### ***Casteism—A Hindrance to Progress***

To Swamiji's vision, the *shudras*, the *pariahs*, were the proletariat of India, and the Indian socialism was to be conceived in terms of their betterment. True, he could not condemn caste outright, for caste fundamentally, was a 'glorious social institution', and any future society must recognise its intrinsic worth (5.198). But he had no love for the hereditary caste system which is a hindrance to progress. He said: 'Modern caste distinction is a barrier to India's progress. It narrows, restricts, separates' (*ibid.*).

The importance of discourse may be discussed in this context. Discourse is thought

of as language in use and is considered to be both the product and manifestation of particular social conditions, class structures, and power relationships that alter in the course of history.<sup>10</sup> Colonial discourse revolved around the myths of power, the race classifications, and the imagery of subordination. The difference in the discourse of caste and casteism is the root cause of marginalisation and degradation of a section of the Indian society. Caste is a natural order, though casteism, in the modern sense of the term, is not.

Swamiji's explanation of caste is exactly on the lines of postcolonial discourse: 'In Sanskrit, Jati, i.e. species. Now, this is the first idea of creation. Variation (Vichitrata), that is to say Jati, means creation. "I am One, I become many" (various Vedas). Unity is before creation, diversity is creation. Now if this diversity stops, creation will be destroyed. ... Now the original idea of Jati was this freedom of the individual to express his nature, his Prakriti, his Jati, his caste; and so it remained for thousands of years. ... Then what was the cause of India's downfall?—the giving up of this idea of caste. ... The present caste is not the real Jati, but a hindrance to its progress.'<sup>11</sup>

Swamiji makes it clear that caste has nothing to do with religion: 'Soul has no caste, and to think it has is a delusion' (7.34). Again he says: 'When this feeling of the all-round good of all without respect for caste or colour will awaken in your heart, then I shall know you are advancing towards the ideal' (7.236).

### ***Decentring or Recontextualisation of Caste***

Postmodernism or postcolonialism is nothing but decentring. It can be decentring of power, knowledge, ideas, or anything. It never allows privileges but promotes decentring or

recontextualisation, which allows free play of meanings, ideas, or power relations. Its very aim is to find the binary oppositions like the rich and the poor, the coloniser and the colonised, the privileged and the underprivileged, the capitalists and the proletariats, and identify which one is central and which one is marginal and then to allow a free play of the two. The very advantage of this scheme of thought is that it resists inequalities of any type and it never destroys anything. Rather, it gives room for local narratives in place of grand narratives, respects all, maintains equality and justice, and finds room for multicultural practices and diverse functions.

Viewed in the above light it may be said that Swamiji's approach towards caste is a kind of deconstruction. It is never destruction but recontextualisation. He says: 'What you call the Jati dharma is quite contrary to what we have in fact. ... Try to bring back the true Jati dharma and then it will be a real and sure boon to the country' (5.456–7).

Swamiji explains the methodology of decentralisation in the following terms: 'The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher. ... The ideal at one end is the Brahmin and the ideal at the other end is the Chandala, and the whole work is to raise the Chandala up to the Brahmin' (3.295).

Swamiji is of the opinion that there is no country in the world without caste and in India, from caste we reach to the point where there is no caste. It is worth noticing that Swamiji had a message for the different castes: 'To the Brahmins I appeal, that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know ... It is clearly the duty of the Brahmins of India to remember what real Brahminhood is' (3.297). Again he said: 'To the non-brahmin castes I


say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brahmin' (3.298); 'the only way to raise your condition is to study Sanskrit ... The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education which is the strength of the higher castes' (3.291).

The legitimate fructification of caste as the most glorious Indian institution becomes illegitimate and destructive if it is based on a super arrogated excellence of birth. The voice of the subaltern remains unheard within the colonial discourse as well as the discourse of casteism. But the postcolonial discourses and endeavours shall be a striving for raising their voices that Swamiji puts as follows: 'Feel, my children, feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad' (4.367).

Postcolonialism, in fact, presents an occasion for thinking the concept of progress. In the postcolonial period, progress is to be measured using the parameters of justice, equality, and liberty. But the question is: What is the founding principle upon which these glaring ideals can be realised? Whereas for the Western postmodern and postcolonial thinkers this can be achieved through a shift from grand narrative to local narratives, for thinkers like Swamiji, true progress can be achieved only if society is rooted in the spiritual and cultural foundations of truth. As a spiritual humanist, Swamiji asserted the resplendent glory of human nature. He said: 'Love alone is the fittest thing to survive' (3.188). In his view an ideal egalitarian society is not a mere theoretical concept but one which can be best established with the collaboration of the different classes. 'If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial, and the ideal of equality of the

last can all be kept intact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state' (6.381).

## Conclusion

Rereading Swamiji along the lines of postcolonialism makes it clear that his views on the distortion of caste, the rising power of the shudras, the need of the power of the Indians to discriminate the glory of the fleeting materialistic capitalistic tradition of the West from the eternal and elevating spiritual culture of their own motherland, and the recontextualisation and not the destruction of caste system, are much significant for the progress of today's India, which is passing through its postcolonial period. 

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# YOUNG EYES

## *Facing Bullying*

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**C**HILDREN CONSTANTLY FACE bullying. They are bullied by the children of their age, by elder children, by adults, sometimes by parents, and also by teachers. Children can understand that they are being bullied and can talk to the bullies and explain to them why it is wrong to bully someone. But, bullies are bullies and they do not listen to any advice and do not heed any words of wisdom. And it becomes worse if the bully is an adult, and worse still if it is a parent. Now, children are supposed to be protected by these adults or parents, and if they themselves bully children, where should a child go to for help? Bullying is done because the bullies think that it is their right to treat the bullied in an inhuman manner. Even quite intelligent people forget that when they bully someone, they are robbing that person of basic human dignity. And if the bullied is a child, the entire childhood is scarred and the child cannot grow healthily, either in the body or in the mind.

How do children bully other children? The first and most common way of bullying of children by the other children of same age is by creating all kinds of unwanted situations for a child. For example, a child in school can be bullied by other students of the same class by taking things away from the school bag or the locker. So, things like pencils, pens, notebooks, textbooks, lunch boxes, snacks, and other school items could be removed or stolen from a child's school bag or locker. Sometimes these bullies also push and make a child fall to the ground, thereby hurting the child.

Sometimes, bullies from the same class beat a child just to show that they are very strong physically and that they are the leaders of the class and that they will do this to anyone who does not listen to their commands. Normally, these bully-children are encouraged by not getting any scolding or punishment for their behaviour from their parents.

Parents of bully-children generally support their children and put the entire blame on the bullied children. They even fight with the parents of the bullied children. So, not only are these children bullied, their parents are also bullied. This behaviour of the parents of the bully-children only increases the bullying by these children. Most of these bully-children are not properly guided or attended to by the parents in their homes and that is one of the important reasons why these children become bullies.

Children are also bullied by elder children of their school. Even if a child can fight children of one's own age, it is almost impossible for a child to fight children older than themselves. And so, they have to just get beaten or bullied. These older children also have the same aim of showing to the other children of the school that they are the leaders of the school and that all the children have to obey them or face the consequences. Most of such older bully-children simply threaten or disturb younger children of the school and get much joy by doing so.

How do parents react to their children reporting bullying in their school? Most parents do not want to get into trouble. The first thing



they think of is what would happen if their child has to leave a school and where would they get admission for their child. So, mostly they ask the child to avoid going near bully-children. But, parents do not understand that no child wants to go to a bully; the bullies go to these children. If the bullied child insists that this should be reported to the school authorities, then the parent suggests that it is better to change the class and go to another section. But, why should the child leave one's friends and go to another section for the fault of the bully-children?

The parents sometimes suggest that it is better to change the school. They do not understand how difficult it is to get adjusted in a school. The child has to get adjusted to new friends, new environment, new teachers, new systems, and so many other new things all at once. Why should a bullied child be forced to undergo so much of pain and trouble when it is the fault of the bully-children? And most of the times, the school authorities also support the bully-children,

because their parents are influential people of society, who give big donations to the school and have no time for their children, and make these children turn into bullies.

The parents, teachers, and all other grown-ups should understand that it is really difficult for a child to report a case of bullying. When a child does so, adults should console the child and ensure that the child is given all physical and emotional support. It is meaningless and cruel to ask the child to change section or school for someone else's fault. When children are supported like this, they will be more willing to report any case of bullying and they will not fight or beat the bully-children. This way, society can stop children from growing up into bad persons. Also, every house, school, and all other public places should have some method of preventing bullying. Bullying affects a child's health and mind, and does not allow the child to study or become good in whatever activity the child is doing. So, the elders should understand this.

PS



# BALABODHA

*Ancient Wisdom Made Easy*

## Moksha

THE WORD 'MOKSHA' is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word 'moksha' is liberation from the transmigratory cycle of samsara or repeated lifetimes of births and deaths. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word 'moksha' is derived from the word *moksh* by adding a *ghain* suffix. The word *moksh* is derived from the root word *much*, which means to loosen, let loose, free, let go, slacken, release, liberate, spare, let live, set free, allow to depart, dismiss, despatch, relinquish, abandon, leave, quit, give up, set aside, depose, yield, grant, bestow, send forth, shed, emit, utter, discharge, throw, cast, hurl, shoot, put on, deliver one's self from, get rid of, escape, abstain from, be deprived or destitute of, cause to loosen or let go or give up or discharge or shed, unloosen, unyoke, unharness, absolve from, redeem, open, give away, spend, bestow, gladden, delight, and yield enjoyment.

The word 'moksha' means emancipation, liberation, release, release from worldly existence or transmigration, final or eternal emancipation, death, sacred hymns conducive to final emancipation, the liberation of an eclipsed or occulted planet, the last contact or separation of the eclipsed and eclipsing bodies, end of an eclipse, falling off or falling down, effusion,

setting free, deliverance, loosening, untying, settling, acquittance of an obligation, discharge of a debt, shedding or causing to flow, casting, shooting, hurling, strewing, scattering, utterance, relinquishment, abandonment, freedom, escape, rescue, delivery, and the deliverance of the *jivatma* or individual soul from recurring births or transmigration. 'Moksha' also means the last of the four ends of human existence, namely, dharma, *artha*, *kama*, and moksha. It also means unbinding, causing to fall down, discharging, and a name of the *patali* tree of the *bignoniaceae* family.

'Moksha' means the end of all three kinds of suffering, namely the suffering that is produced by one's body and mind, by other living beings, and by natural and cosmic forces. 'Moksha' signifies the destruction of all aspirations, expectations, and hopes upon attaining the bliss of the knowledge of one's true nature. It also means the realisation of one's true nature, the Atman. It also means the falling of dry leaves from a tree. It means the destruction of ignorance. This word also means practical intellect and rejection. It is also used to refer to the *ghantaparali* or the white trumpet flower or the *dhatura* plant in the *brugmansia* family. The word 'moksha' also refers to the *mushkaka* or the weaver's beam tree having the botanical name *schrebera swietenoides* in the *oleaceae* or jasmine family.

'Moksha' refers to the state of no bondage. It signifies renunciation by knowledge, diminution of attachment and aversion, and loss of desires. It also signifies one's realisation of one's identity with Brahman.

PB

# TRADITIONAL TALES

## *Sri Rama and Sri Krishna*

ONCE ARJUNA DECIDED to perform austerities and meditate on Lord Shiva to obtain the Pashupata weapon. With this aim, he left for the temple town of Rameswaram, alone in a chariot, and journeyed through a forest path, killing many wild animals on his way. Finally, he reached Rameswaram. He bathed in the sea there. He completed his noon prayers and then rode his chariot with pride across the length and breadth of the seashore.

At that time, Hanuman, the great devotee of Sri Rama, was performing austerities on a hill in the forest nearby. Arjuna happened to see Hanuman, who was immersed in repeating Sri Rama's name. Full of pride, Arjuna asked Hanuman in a rebuking tone: 'Hey, old monkey! Who are you? What is your name?' Hanuman replied softly with a smile: 'Sri Rama made a bridge out of rocks, went to Sri Lanka, and killed Ravana. I am the slave of such a great Sri Rama. I am called Hanuman and the son of the wind-god.'

Arjuna laughed hearing Hanuman's praise of Sri Rama and said derisively: 'Hey monkey! If your Sri Rama was indeed valorous, why did he take the trouble of creating a bridge on sea? Had he been really a great archer, why could he not accomplish his goal by building a bridge by arrows?' Arjuna asked this by loudly laughing in pride. Hanuman, who was silent till then, became greatly angered on hearing Arjuna's ridicule of Sri Rama. Hanuman would have forborne his insult, but how could he keep quiet when someone ridiculed Sri Rama? Hence, he angrily asked Arjuna: 'Arjuna, if a bridge of arrows were

built, it would have sunk in the sea by the weight of the army of monkeys like me. That is why Sri Rama did not build a bridge of arrows. Are you a greater archer than Sri Rama?'

Was not Arjuna known as the conqueror of the bow? Hence, he told with pride: 'Hanuman! If the bridge built of arrows were to sink in the sea by the weight of the monkey-army, then where is the greatness of the archer's knowledge of archery? Now this moment, right in front of you, I will build a great bridge of arrows on the sea. You may get up on that bridge and jump and dance as you like. Then you would know for yourself whether or not I am a greater archer than your Sri Rama.'

Hanuman asked with a smile: 'I will get up on the bridge that you will build out of arrows, and I will jump on it. If by my doing so, the bridge breaks or shatters, what would you do? Tell me what would you do if the bridge you will build sinks into the sea the moment my big toe touches the bridge?' Arjuna challenged Hanuman: 'Hanuman! If the bridge that I will build were to sink into the sea by your weight, I would start a fire in this very spot and enter into it and give up my life. This is true. Tell me what would you do if the arrow-bridge does not sink into the sea. Tell me what you are betting.'

Hearing Arjuna's pledge, Hanuman said: 'Arjuna! I will sink your arrow-bridge with my big toe. If it does not happen, I will stay on the flag of your chariot and help you in all ways that you need.' Arjuna agreed to Hanuman's bet and said: 'Great! Let us do so.' Arjuna thought: 'I will build a bridge much stronger than what

Hanuman is expecting and thus show my power to him.' Thinking thus, he took his famous bow named Gandiva, set arrows on it, and started shooting them. He showered arrows on the sea and completed the building of an elegant bridge. Then he told to Hanuman with pride: 'Yes. Now, you can test the strength of this bridge.'

Hanuman prayed in his mind: 'O Sri Rama! I am your slave. You make me do whatever you wish.' Then, repeating the name of Sri Rama, he pressed his big toe on the edge of the 800-kilometre long arrow-bridge built by Arjuna, without climbing on it. As though it was waiting for this to happen, the bridge shattered

to smithereens and there was no sign left of the bridge. Arjuna's wonderful bridge broke just like wind breaks the cardboard-houses built by children or just like sand houses built by children are destroyed in a moment by the sea. The great warrior Arjuna bent in shame because of this great insult. He was shocked and depressed. He was not worried about entering fire and dying. He worried with these thoughts: 'I had come here to obtain the Pashupata weapon, but have failed to accomplish that! My brothers, the other Pandavas, will search for me, not knowing what happened to me.'

*(To be continued)*

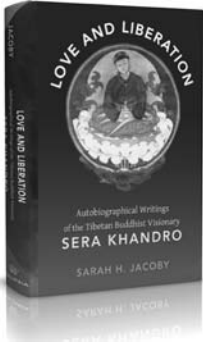


IMAGE: [HTTP://WWW.TARUNGOEL.IN](http://www.tarungoel.in)



# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



**Love and Liberation:  
Autobiographical Writings  
of the Tibetan Buddhist  
Visionary Sera Khandro**  
Sarah H Jacoby

Columbia University Press, 61 West  
62 Street, New York, NY 10023.  
USA. Website: <https://cup.columbia.edu>. 2016. 456 pp. \$80.00. HB. ISBN  
9780231147682.

Sarah H Jacoby has not been able to maintain a critical distance between herself and the autobiography of the Tibetan mystic Sera Khandro Wangmo (1892–1940). Sera Khandro was vigilant about her possible transgressive practices as a *jo min nag min*—neither nun nor laywoman (188), while Jacoby as a wide-eyed acolyte of everything Tibetan does not realise that she weakens the case for Tibetan Buddhism by accepting wholesale Khandro's human failings as being part of Vajrayana.

Jacoby's book is marred by her foregrounding of Vajrayana with the libidinal economy of the *yab yum* dyad within Buddhist tantra. Had Jacoby been existentially authentic, she would have stressed that the *yab yum*—masculine-feminine or father-mother—relationship is a mental construct in praxis. Unfortunately, Jacoby is aware that most Buddhist tantrics imagine union—*bskyed rim*—with their consorts and do not participate within any economy mediated by the libidinal. Even the Shakta epochal avatara, Sri Ramakrishna, who attained all the tantric siddhis and one of his first celibate disciples, Swami Saradananda, never gave into anything libidinal, nor did they drink anything intoxicating. Both Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Saradananda were adepts in tantra. Moreover, this reviewer is aware of a contemporary living tantric, who has attained all the tantric siddhis mentioned within both Vajrayana and Shakta tantras. This tantric is horrified by Jacoby's misrepresentation of

tantra and its praxis. While Khandro was acutely aware of her liminal status as a tantric consort and her absolute moral wrongs; Jacoby is preoccupied with possibly psychotic visions of *dakinis* that Khandro had, while Khandro herself knew of her mission as a proclaimer of Buddha-dharma: 'I pray that my final action will be / to practice the Dharma. / I am like a fall and winter flower; / Although I am here today, / I am gone tomorrow' (275).

Sarah H Jacoby is not greater than Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Saradananda. Neither is she more knowledgeable about tantra than the contemporary tantric this reviewer has mentioned above. When all three reject sensuality, how is it possible to take Jacoby seriously? Yet many scholars in the first world have praised her debauched scholarship.

Jacoby's 'Epilogue' is a pseudo-scientific structuralist hotchpotch, which without scrutinising the philosophy of reincarnation comes up with this vacuous statement: 'multiple Tibetan women and men ... would be recognised as her incarnation' (324). Jacoby naively shows how several women in Tibet now are simultaneously Khandro's reincarnations, and all of them are in live-in relationships, which they pass off as *yab yum* relationships. Jacoby is mistaken in her studies of Vajrayana and would do well to read Beverley Foulks McGuire for understanding the differences between true Buddhist tantra and debased practices, which most people erroneously conflate with tantra. This reviewer is disgusted by Jacoby's involvement and co-option in New Age tantra, which has nothing to do with any of the myriad tantras in their pristine glory. This book misleads and should not be used by anyone interested in Vajrayana. Jacoby's writing titillates without illuminating.

Being from the first world she could get this worthless book published from Columbia University Press and get scholars from Columbia University, the University of Cambridge, and

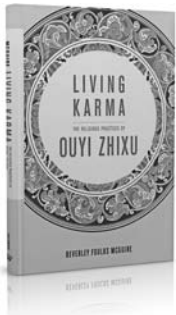
Harvard Divinity School praise her book fulsomely. This is what happens when scholars theorise on Vajrayana without practising it themselves. Recently it has been revealed in American and British courts that all these Ivy League Universities and some of the Russell groups of Universities indulge in quid pro quo practices. The online and offline praise that Jacoby has been able to get for herself shows why we should not hanker for Ivy League recognitions. All Jacoby's acolytes are members of the ivory-tower academia, where they probably practice armchair Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. It is generally not the norm to write in the first person in academic reviews. But this reviewer is so nauseated by Jacoby's book that he has to end this review in the first person: 'I warn you of the real, palpable evil that is this book. It reeks of moral corruption and superficial jingoism.' Sera Khandro was certainly a mystic, but Jacoby's portrayal of Khandro is way off the mark.

Jacoby is aware that Atisha Dipamkara was against the kind of debased tantra that Sera Khandro dabbled in and yet Jacoby tautologically praises everything that Khandro did. This uncritical homage to Sera Khandro flies in the face of everything holy. It is the likes of Jacoby, who have destroyed the sacred discipline of tantra. This book should be considered a New Age tantra fad book and the discerning scholar and practitioner should turn to Georg Feuerstein's tantric corpus to understand even Vajrayana. *Prabuddha Bharata* brought out a special issue titled 'Reflections on Tantra' under the editorship of Swami Narasimhananda in January 2016. This annual issue should be consulted for all things tantric.

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**Living Karma: The Religious Practices of Ouyi Zhixu**  
Beverley Foulks McGuire

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New York, NY 10023, USA. Website: <https://cup.columbia.edu>. 2014. 240 pp. \$60.00. HB. ISBN 9780231168021.

Divination is not a very acceptable topic of discussion within any religion. And rarely do we come across a serious study of divination that is vital to both Buddhism and Hinduism. Beverley Foulks McGuire, to use Walter Pater's phrase in a very different context, in her hard gemlike monograph brings to life the archaeology of divination as is still practised in Hindu temples and of course, within Buddhism. She even gives a photograph of the wheel tops used in China.

In India, this reviewer has seen shells being used for the same purpose. Foulks McGuire uses the interpretation of the Chinese Buddhist *Divination Sutra* by the sixteenth-century commentator of the *Vinayas*, the Venerable Ouyi Zhixu. The monograph under review shows how Zhixu struggled to live an authentic life as a Buddhist monk who was troubled that he may not be good enough for being a Zen monastic. All his life, this Buddhist monk had questioned himself and his scholarship as falling short of the Buddhist monastic ideal. Even in his uses of divination, Zhixu only wanted nirvana.

McGuire has been able to weave Zhixu's life and his works in this tour de force in Chinese Buddhist scholarship. Zhixu indeed was interested in karma as the name of the monograph suggests, but it is unique because the monograph's author is able to overcome the structuralist stranglehold, which makes the scholarship of other experts in the field seem dry and devoid of all soul.

This is not a book that one usually reads in one sitting. But this reviewer read it in one sitting because of the book's wide-ranging scholarship and its beguiling lucidity. Yet the author has burnt a lot of midnight oil and therefore, we find the fourth endnote to Chapter Four in page 174 talking of the 1962 Harvard lectures of J L Austin on the differences between the locutionary and the illocutionary acts. This footnote then correctly moves on to David Gorman's problematisation of performativity within contemporary literary theory. These references are seamlessly connected to page 83 of this book, subtitled 'The Genre of Votive Texts: Imagining Future BodhiSattvahood' within the chapter 'Vowing to Assume the Karma of Others'.

(Continued on page 486)

# MANANA

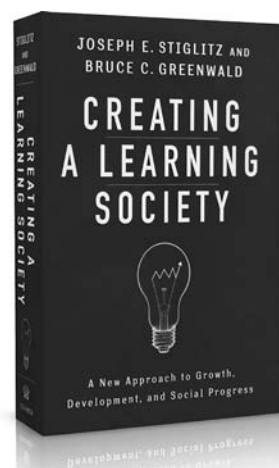
**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
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**Creating a Learning Society:  
A New Approach to Growth, Development,  
and Social Progress**

Joseph E Stiglitz and Bruce C Greenwald

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New  
York, NY 10023, USA. 2014. xvi + 660 pp. \$34.95. HB.  
ISBN 9780231152143.

IN THE FIRST FEW chapters of this book, we lay out our basic theses: that most of the increases in standards of living are, as Solow suggested, a result of increases in productivity—learning how to do things better. And if it is true that productivity is the result of learning and that productivity increases (learning) are endogenous, then a focal point of policy ought to be increasing learning within the economy; that is, increasing the ability and the incentives to learn, and learning how to learn, and then closing the knowledge gaps that separate the most productive firms in the economy from the rest. Therefore, *creating a learning society should be one of the major objectives of economic policy*. If a learning society is created, a more productive economy will emerge and standards of living will increase. By contrast, we show that many of the policies focusing on static (allocative) efficiency may in fact impede learning and that alternative policies may lead to higher long-term living standards. Thus, the theory that we develop provides one of the most compelling and fully articulate critiques of the Washington consensus policies that dominated development thinking in the quarter century before the Great Recession. The theory also provides the basis of a new theory of the firm—a new answer to the question posed more than 75 years ago by Ronald Coase: What determines the



boundaries of firms, what goes on inside the firm? It also provides a new approach to thinking about both static and dynamic comparative advantage.

Part One also gives the reader a view of the historical, empirical, and theoretical background and justification for our learning-society perspective. We describe key aspects of creating a learning society: the processes and determinants of learning and some of their broad implications for economic architecture—the design of the economic system and its subcomponents (most importantly, firms)—and policy. We explain the implications of ‘localisation of knowledge’ (both technologically and spatially), extend the concept of learning by doing to learning to learn by learning, explain why geographically concentrated large enterprises, traditionally in the industrial sector but more recently in the modern services sector, have been at the center of growth—with high rates of productivity increases and large spillovers to other sectors of the economy. We explain, too, the link between macro-stability and long-run productivity growth—a new rationale for why *real* macro-stability is so important.

Having analysed the basic determinants of learning, we address two critical questions: Is there likely to be more or less learning in economies that are more competitive (with more firms)? And is the market likely to be efficient in

the level and pattern of innovation and learning? In asking the latter question, we note that the level of competition (concentration) is itself *endogenous*—though it can be affected by government policies. As we have already noted, Arrow's earlier work provided more than a little hint that the outcomes of market processes would not be efficient, though he did not directly challenge Schumpeterian views which championed the innovative virtues of the market. The picture that emerges from our analysis is complex: Joseph Schumpeter was overly optimistic about monopolies—he thought that they would be only temporary and that competition to be the dominant firm drove innovation. We show that monopolies may be far more persistent than he (and latter-day Schumpeterians) thought and that the fight to be the dominant firm may be far less effective in stimulating innovation than he thought. Still, Schumpeter was right that more competitive markets, with many small firms, are likely to be *less* innovative.

The central message that emerges is that there is an important role for government to play in shaping an innovative economy and in promoting learning. Parts Two and Three of the book explore in more detail how the government can best do this.

Part Two provides the key analytical results, moving from simple models to more complex. The two key chapters are 7 and 11. Chapter 7 looks at a two-good (agricultural and manufacturing) closed economy (no trade) model and explains how policies promoting the industrial (manufacturing) sector (such as subsidies) lead to higher rates of growth and welfare. The short-run (allocative) distortions are more than offset by the long-term learning benefits. Simple formulae describing the optimal subsidy are derived. In this simple setting, we can compare the rate of innovation if there is competition with that when the

industrial sector is dominated by a single firm. Innovation will be higher with monopoly, but whether welfare will be higher is ambiguous and depends on learning elasticities and discount rates.

Chapter 11 extends the analysis to an open economy, establishing the infant-economy argument for protection. Because the industrial sector not only has a greater capacity for learning but also more learning spillovers, encouraging that sector through protection or industrial policies can lead to higher growth and societal welfare. The force of the argument for protection is much weaker in developed economies. In economies like the United States, Europe, and Japan, there is already a dense infrastructure that has the scale to develop ideas and innovations, though there may still be cross-sector or cross-industry learning externalities that might warrant government intervention.

The theory has a wide range of implications. To illustrate: Our analysis suggests that it is desirable for large groups of countries to work together to facilitate trade amongst each other, while erecting certain barriers to trade from the outside. Competition and incentives matter. Having broad collections of countries, like the European Union, competing behind broad barriers, has considerable attraction. The protection enables the development of the 'learning' (industrial) sector; the size provides scope for competition. (Our earlier remark explains why the degree of protection should be reduced over time.)

The structure of trade policy in the successful developing economies, like Japan, Europe after the Second World War, or other economies in Asia, has been very much of this sort. They have not focused on particular industries and protected them; they have tended to have broad protection across a range of industries; and they have actually encouraged competition behind those barriers.





# REPORTS



*Swami Vivekananda Memorial, Belagavi*

## **New Mission Centre**

A new branch centre of **Ramakrishna Mission** has been started at **Bilaspur**. The address of the centre is 'Ramakrishna Mission, Koni Road, Opp. New Bus Terminal, Sarkanda, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh 495 009', phone: 82401 29728 and 94335 30046, and email: <bilaspur@rkmm.org>. The formal inauguration programme, held on 22 February, was attended by about 500 people.

## **News of Branch Centres**

**Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia** held an inter-school athletic meet on 23 and 24 January 2019 in which 105 students of 13 Ramakrishna Mission schools in West Bengal took part. Purulia Vidyapith won the champions' trophy.

Sri Ramesh Chandra Majhi, Minister of ST and SC Development, and Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare, Government of Odisha, visited **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Hata-muniguda** on 10 December and distributed scholarships to students.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal** observed World Diabetes Day on 25 November with a procession, speeches, an exhibition, cultural competitions, and other programmes to create awareness about diabetes. Blood sugar tests were also conducted for about 300 people that day.

**Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow** held a workshop on paediatric nephrology on 16 November in which 30 paediatricians took part. A free mid-day meal scheme was also launched at the Sevashrama on 17 November, to provide free meals to the attendants of indoor patients of the Sevashrama's hospital. A three-day Ayurveda fair was also hosted from 24 to 26 November in which about 1,000 patients were treated.

**Ramakrishna Mission, Narottam Nagar** held a medical camp on 9 December in which 472 patients were treated by six specialist doctors.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban** conducted a urology-cum-general-surgery camp from 28 November to 4 December in which 14 specialist doctors checked 342 outdoor patients and performed surgeries on 120 indoor patients.

**Ramakrishna Math, Bagda** conducted free homeopathic treatment camps at Sargora and Bargora villages in Purulia district on 23 December and 24 February, in which 66 and 104 patients were given medicines respectively.

**Ramakrishna Math, Chennai** held a medical camp at its rural development centre in Meyyur village on 21 January in which 70 children with cardiac problems were treated; The ashrama also held a programme for Leprosy Cured but Deformed Persons (LCDPs) on 3 February which was attended by 103 LCDPs. Various items were distributed to 25 LCDPs to help them earn their living.

The ashrama celebrated Vivekananda Navaratri from 6 to 14 February by holding lectures and cultural programmes at **Vivekananda House, Chennai**, in commemoration of Swami Vivekananda's nine-day stay there from 6 to 14 February 1897. Sri Banwarilal Purohit, Governor of Tamil Nadu, and Sri O Panneerselvam, Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, attended the celebrations.

**Ramakrishna Mission, Dibrugarh** conducted three medical camps in January in which 118 patients underwent different diagnostic tests and received treatment.

**Ramakrishna Math, Gourhati** held a health awareness camp on 30 January, which was attended by 150 persons; 91 of them underwent different diagnostic tests.

**Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir, Khetri** held a yogasana camp from 23 December to 1 January, attended by about 100 people.

**Ramakrishna Math, Lalgurh** conducted a blood donation camp on 12 January in which 50 people donated blood.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Medinipur** held a medical camp at Madhupur, under Salboni block, a backward tribal area in Paschim Medinipur district, on 26 January, in which 1,542 patients were treated.

**Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur** held a parents' convention in Gondia, attended by 225 parents.

**Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong** held a blood donation camp on 12 January in which 29 people donated blood.

On 17 January, the **Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata**, conferred the Vivekananda Award, comprising a cash award of one lakh rupees and a citation, to Sri Thokchom Shiba Dutta Singh for his contribution to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in Manipuri, and Vivekananda Medals to two charitable organisations, namely Nanritam, Purulia district, and Vivekananda Swasthya Seva Sangha, Kolkata. Each of these organisations was given a gold medal along with the award. Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presented the award and the medals.

On the occasion of Kumbha Mela, **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Prayagraj (Allahabad)** put up a camp on the Mela ground from 12 January to 20 February. In all, about 200 monks and 1,500 other pilgrims were provided with board and lodging. Devotional songs and discourses were held daily at the shrine-cum-satsang pandal, along with an exhibition on the Holy Trio in another pandal. About 32,000 patients were treated at the charitable dispensary. A commemorative volume was also brought out by the centre.

Swami Suvirananda inaugurated Swami Vivekananda Memorial at the city centre of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Belagavi** on 1 February. The memorial includes a shrine, an exhibition on Swamiji, and an audiovisual theatre and is housed in the very building, formerly called Bhate's House, in which Swamiji had stayed for a few days in 1892. As part of the inauguration, a youths' convention, a devotees' convention, and cultural programmes were held from 1 to 3 February in which 80 monks, 1,200 youths, and 600 devotees participated.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, inaugurated the year-long centenary celebrations of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Salem** on 2 February. In this connection, special worship, a grand procession, public meetings, and a youths' convention were held from 2 to 4 February, attended by about 9,000 people in all. A commemorative volume was also brought out.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the new monks' quarters at **Ramakrishna Mission Centre for Human Excellence and Social Sciences, New Town, Kolkata**, on 6 February, the sacred birthday of Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj.

Sushri Uma Bharti, Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation, visited **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur** on 23 February.

Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated Akhandananda Bhavan, the new residential quarters at **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI), Belur**, on 27 February, for the employees, faculty, and research scholars. Swami Suvirananda, who is also the Chancellor of the university, among others, attended the function.

On the initiative of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira** (EMRS), **Jhargram**, a statue of Swami Vivekananda was installed at Jhargram town on 27 February.

Students of the Sanskrit Department of **RKMVERI, Belur**, took part in the following events and won medals: 1) National level cultural competitions conducted by Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi, on its Agartala campus from 6 to 9 January: 2 silver medals; 2) The 13th All India Sanskrit Students' Talent Festival conducted by Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, from 4 to 7 February: 1 gold medal and 2 bronze medals. In addition to the medals, all the winners received certificates and cash prizes.

**Ramakrishna Mission, Aalo** held a dental check-up camp from 11 to 18 February in which 1,035 people were examined.

**Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Chennai** conducted a blood donation camp on 29 January in which 1,448 students donated blood.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj inaugurated the renovated Gita Darshan exhibition at **Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad** on 17 February.

### **Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Addresses at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA**

The following centres held programmes mentioned against their names: **In India: Chennai Vidyapith:** Public meetings and cultural competitions from 29 January to 6 February in which about 5,000 students took part. **Coimbatore Mission Vidyalyaya:** Cultural competitions in 6 schools and colleges in Coimbatore and Erode between 29 December and 15 February. In all, 1,424 students took part in the competitions. At all the venues, the competitions were followed by a talk, an awards ceremony, and a skit. **Guwahati:** A public meeting on 3 February attended by some 300

people. **Hatamuniguda:** A youths' convention on 30 and 31 January in which 500 students took part.

**Hyderabad:** A seminar on 'Relevance of Chicago Addresses in the twenty-first century' on 17 February which was attended by about 1,200 people. Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj and other speakers presented their views. **Kailashahar:** (i) Cultural competitions at ten schools and a college from 2 to 17 February in which about 500 students participated. (ii) A youths' convention and a devotees' convention at the Ashrama on 23 and 24 February, which were attended by 800 youths and 610 devotees. (iii) Another youths' convention in Udaipur on 25 February in which about 1,000 students participated. **Mysuru:** Two workshops on 13 and 16 February in which a total of 359 college students took part. **Swamiji's Ancestral House:** A spiritual retreat on 21 January, which was attended by 450 devotees. **Outside India: Phoenix, South Africa:** (i) A programme comprising bhajans, talks, and a video show on 5 February, attended by 600 people. (ii) A seminar on 16 February in which 130 people took part.

### **Values Education and Youth Programmes**

**Chennai Math** hosted a day-long workshop on 24 February for students on facing the board examinations. In all, 225 students from 14 schools took part in the workshop.

**Haripad Math** held values education camps at two schools in Alappuzha district on 14 and 15 February, which were attended by 444 students.

**Jamshedpur** centre conducted a youths' convention on 3 February, which was attended by about 1,200 people.

**Mangaluru** centre held three education conclaves on 14, 15, and 16 February for college lecturers, postgraduate students, and teacher trainees respectively. In all, about 1,300 people participated. The centre also conducted lectures in 10 colleges in February, thus reaching out to about 2,200 youths.

**Medinipur** centre held values education workshops in 11 schools and colleges in West Bengal from 2 to 19 February; they were attended by about 5,500 students and teachers.

**Nagpur** Math conducted a youths' convention on 12 February, attended by 620 students.

**Rajkot** Ashrama held the following events: (i) Two special seminars for students, at a university and on the centre's campus, on 30 January and 3 February, which were attended by 650 students. (ii) Thirteen values education programmes in the centre as well as in different schools and colleges between 5 and 23 February, attended by about 2,200 students. (iii) Four talks on human excellence at the Ashrama and also at corporate houses between 6 and 22 February, in which about 250 professionals took part.

### Relief

**Fire Relief:** (a) **West Bengal:** In response to a fire accident at a slum in Kolkata, **Kankurgachhi** centre distributed 17 karahis, 17 handis, 34 ladles, 17 buckets, 17 mugs, 17 jugs, 52 plates, 52 bowls, and 52 tumblers among 17 affected families on 26 December. (b) **Arunachal Pradesh:** In a fire accident on 6 January in Deomali market area in Tirap district, 6 shops had been completely burned down. **Narottam Nagar** centre distributed, on the day of the accident, 14 blankets, 14 sweatshirts, 7 shirts, and 14 trousers among the 6 affected families. (c) **Meghalaya:** In a fire accident in Shillong on 12 January, 5 houses had been completely burned down. **Shillong** centre distributed 125 kg rice, 27 sweaters, 11 jackets, 18 shirts, 15 trousers, 19 tops, 16 sets of salwar-kameez, and 54 blankets, among the 5 affected families on 16 January. (d) **Odisha:** In response to a fire accident at Gohalia village in Bhadrak district on 14 January, in which 14 huts had been burned down, Kothar centre distributed 200 kg rice, 50 kg dal, 150 kg potatoes, 50 kg onions, 4 kg garlic, 11 kg edible oil, 84 litres kerosene

oil, 102 packets of biscuits, 56 matchboxes, 14 sets of utensils (each set containing a karahi, a handi, a ladle, a spoon, a mug, and a bucket), 14 lungis, 14 saris, 14 other ladies' garments, 14 mosquito-nets, 14 torches, and 14 mats among the 14 affected families from 16 to 21 January.

**Economic Rehabilitation :** Under self-employment programme, the following centres distributed necessary items to poor and needy people: **India:** **Khetri:** 104 sewing machines on 9 December. **Rahara:** 6 sewing machines, 6 cycle rickshaws and 4 rickshaw-trolleys on 28 December. **Antpur:** 81 sets of dhadda (weaving accessories), 25 sewing machines and 17 rickshaw-trolleys from 12 January to 22 February. **Chandipur:** 4 sewing machines on 30 January. **Taki:** 1 fishing boat and 2 fishing-nets on 15 February. **Bangladesh:** **Comilla:** 1 sewing machine on 28 December.

**Flood Relief:** **Kerala:** Our centres in Kerala continued relief operations among the families affected by the devastating floods that had hit the state in the month of August. Details of the further operations are given below. (a) **Hari-pad** centre distributed 6,000 notebooks, 3,600 pens, and 360 geometry boxes among 1,474 students in Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram districts from 11 November to 18 December. (b) **Koyilandy** centre distributed 78 saris among 39 flood-affected families in Kozhikode district on 26 December. (c) **Tiruvalla** centre distributed 76,810 notebooks, 10,225 geometry boxes, 35,770 pens, and 584 T-shirts among 15,017 students, and 95 sets of utensils (each set containing a pressure cooker, 2 pots, 5 plates, 2 cups, 3 tumblers, 5 spoons, and a ladle) among 95 flood-affected families in Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Pathanamthitta districts from 12 October to 10 December.

**Cyclone Relief:** **Tamil Nadu:** In the wake of severe Cyclone Gaja, **Chennai Math** distributed 1,000 tarpaulins among an equal number of



families in Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, and Thiruvavur districts on 16 December. **Chennai Mission Ashrama** distributed 18,400 kg rice, 3,250 kg dal, 1,890 litres oil, 526 kg tea leaves, 1,034 kg milk powder, 3,100 kg sugar, 3,050 packets of biscuits, 224 cooking vessels, 2,030 saris, 2,370 lungis, 977 bedsheets, 1,018 mats, 5,232 mosquito-coils, and 735 emergency lights among 1,874 families in Nagapattinam, Thiruvavur, and Thanjavur districts from 23 November to 11 December. **Chennai Students' Home** distributed diesel engine spare parts and 98 bedsheets among 221 families in Nagapattinam district from 22 December to 26 January. **Kanchipuram** centre distributed 169 asbestos sheets and 1,200 palm leaves among 13 families in Thanjavur district on 12 January. **Andhra Pradesh:** In the wake of the severe cyclonic storm Titli that hit Andhra Pradesh and Odisha on 11 October, the **Visakhapatnam** centre distributed the following items among the victims in Srikakulam district from 25 October to 6 February: (a) 1,650 blankets, and (b) 4,375 kg resin, 116 kg catalyst, 125 kg accelerator, 27 kg pigment, 1,050 kg chalk powder, and 1,445 kg mat for repairing 125 boats.

**Distress Relief:** The following centres distributed various items to needy people: **India: Aalo:** 792 shirts, 890 trousers, 524 belts, and 56 wallets from 28 December to 9 January. **Almora:** 300 kg rice and 120 kg dal from 1 November to 31 January. **Antpur:** 206 dhotis and 693 saris on 20 September and 148 mosquito-nets from 12 January to 22 February. **Aurangabad:** 5,989 shirts from 14 September to 23 January. **Baghbazar:** 1,597 shirts, 1,748 trousers, 841 belts, 841 wallets, and 130 school bags on 18 November. **Bajepratappur, Bardhaman:** 2,995 shirts and 3,005 trousers from 1 October to 19 December. **Baranagar Math:** 800 saris, 150 dhotis, and 201 school bags from 8 October to 16 December. **Baranagar Mission:** 400 shirts and 399 trousers from 12 December to 16 February. **Belgharia:** 6,093 shirts, 6,093 trousers, and 1,300

tops from 16 November to 25 January. **Barisha:** 199 school bags from 6 April to 29 December. **Belgharia:** 20 saris and 140 children's garments from 17 October to 25 January. **Bhubaneswar:** 401 school bags from 5 August to 15 October. **Chandipur:** 118 saris on 4 January. **Cooch Behar:** 24 dhotis, 129 saris, and 19 mosquito-nets on 27 January and 600 shirts, 600 trousers, 170 saris, 30 dhotis, 100 pairs of socks, and 156 mosquito-nets from 16 December to 3 February. **Darjeeling:** 2,924 shirts and T-shirts, 2,850 saris, 180 dhotis, and 1,762 pairs of shoes from 28 June to 13 February. **Deoghar:** 1,300 shirts and T-shirts, and 1,300 trousers from 5 to 9 January. **Dibrugarh:** 141 notebooks, 47 drawing books, 94 pens, 47 toothbrushes, 47 tubes of toothpaste, 47 phials of oil, 47 jars of cream, 235 pouches of shampoo, 47 packets of cake, 47 packets of fruit juice, and 47 chocolates on 12 January. **Ghatshila:** 49 saris from 10 to 24 December. **Gourhati:** 606 shirts, 397 trousers, 5 bedsheets, and 15 mosquito-nets from 20 November to 30 December. **Guwahati:** 120 saris on 19 January. **Hatamuniguda:** 1,133 shirts and 929 trousers from 9 January to 15 February. **Jammu:** 806 shirts and 810 trousers from 9 May to 5 January. **Jamshedpur:** 500 shirts from 12 December to 3 February. **Jamtara:** 500 shirts and 500 trousers from 1 to 24 February. **Jayrambati:** 5,300 saris from 19 December to 20 January. **Kailashahar:** 500 T-shirts and 500 trousers from 5 to 14 December. **Kamarpukur:** 2,039 shirts, 1,901 trousers, 687 tops, 436 tunics, and 33 frocks from 23 November to 9 December. **Kankurgachhi:** 1,046 dhotis, 57 saris, 663 upper-body wrappers, 370 shirts, 153 T-shirts, 479 trousers, and 280 tops on 21 December. **Karimganj:** 50 saris, 46 dhotis, 1,031 shirts, and 1,463 trousers from 7 July to 6 February. **Katihari:** 403 school bags from 29 March to 24 May. **Khetri:** 1,133 shirts and 1,133 trousers on 26 December, and 2,528 shirts and T-shirts and 97 trousers from 11 January to 14 February. **Koalpara** (sub-centre of Jayrambati

Ashrama): 900 saris from 25 December to 15 January. **Kothar:** 2,159 shirts and 1,786 trousers from 15 July to 2 September. **Koyilandy:** 10 saris on 14 January and 150 shirts and 150 trousers on 10 February. **Lucknow:** 7,500 shirts, 5,000 trousers, and 1,500 tops from 9 December to 14 January. **Malda:** 10 saris on 23 December. **Mangaluru:** 10,001 shirts and 10,001 trousers from 5 August to 12 February. **Medinipur:** 300 dhotis, 255 saris, 840 shirts, 1,160 trousers, and 1,000 tops from 10 December to 26 January. **Nagpur:** 368 T-shirts from 12 to 31 March. **Naora:** 88 school bags from 15 November to 4 January. **Narainpur:** 3,001 shirts, 2,715 trousers, 464 denims, 998 tops, 22 T-shirts, 57 tunics, 22 leggings 440, and other ladies' garments from 8 December to 29 January. **Nattarampalli:** 110 lungis, 140 saris, 600 plates of cooked food, 280 kg rice, 70 kg dal, 21 kg assorted spices, 70 kg jaggery, 28 kg vegetable oil, 7 kg dry fruits, 140 coconuts, 140 sugarcane, and 280 pots on 15 and 16 January. **Puri Mission:** 1,000 shirts from 20 October to 16 December. **Rahara:** 5 dhotis, 92 saris, 262 bedsheets, 82 chaddars, 884 mosquito-nets, 57 packets of baby food, and 2 flasks on 28 December and 10 shirts, 10 trousers, some assorted clothes, and 60 mosquito-nets from 23 December to 28 January. **Rajarhat Bishnupur:** 500 shirts and 500 trousers from 11 to 16 February. **Rajkot:** 1,546 shirts, 1,928 T-shirts, and 3,237 trousers from 28 to 30 September. **Ramharipur:** 1,000 shirts and 1,000 trousers from 9 October to 24 November. **Saradapitha:** 3,000 shirts and 3,000 trousers from 17 December to 25 January. **Sargachhi:** 1,000 shirts and 1,000 trousers from 1 December to 3 February. **Shillong:** 1,502 shirts, 1,000 T-shirts, and 1,500 trousers from 7 October to 11 November. **Shimla:** 724 shirts and T-shirts and 830 trousers from 12 June to 24 December. **Shyamsayer, Bardhaman** (sub-centre of the Headquarters): 100 saris, 100 dhotis, and 100 uttariyas from 8 to 15 January. **Sikra-Kulingram:** 548 shirts and T-shirts, 3,250 notebooks, and 400

pens from 25 November to 12 January. **Sohra (Cherrapunjee):** 15,934 tops, shirts and T-shirts and 2,084 trousers from 3 to 29 December. **Taki:** 45 saris, 25 shirts, and 25 trousers on 15 February. **Varanasi Advaita Ashrama:** 226 tops, 15 trousers, and 17 saris from 19 November to 30 December. **Bangladesh: Chittagong:** 220 saris, 35 bedsheets, 10 pillows, 5 mosquito-nets, 20 plates, 20 tumblers, 20 bowls, 20 spoons, 30 pots, 10 jugs, 10 mugs, and 10 buckets from 10 January to 18 February.

### Notice

Swami Vrajamohananda, whose pre-monastic name is Prashanta, has recently left the Ramakrishna Order attached to Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math. He is not eligible, therefore, to raise funds or seek other help from our devotees and general public on behalf of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

General Secretary,  
Ramakrishna Math and  
Ramakrishna Mission



(Continued from page 478)

In this subsection, the very next, or fifth end-note refers us to the Hebrew Bible. McGuire shows her characteristic easy acquaintance with the Bible in this footnote. This Buddhist work per se thus becomes a powerful statement for interreligious dialogue and process philosophies. McGuire teaches East Asian religions in the US, but she could easily teach Biblical studies and literary theory to seminarians and English literature students respectively, going by her scholarship in this book.

The two appendices at the end are essential but the second appendix, 'A Map of Ouyi's Life' is an original effort at cartographical reconstruction, which while occupying just one page must have taken her a lot of effort. Beverley Foulks McGuire is the scholar to turn to in the Western world for rigour, clarity, and originality in many fields. She surpasses the works of Koichi Shinohara in her holistic approach to the analyses of medieval Zen Buddhism.

*Subhasis Chattopadhyay*



# Appeal

## *for Financial Help for Constructing* **'Publication & Research Centre'**

Namaste.

'Sri Ramakrishna Math' situated at Puranattukara near Thrissur city in Kerala is a branch of 'Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission'. Established as early as 1927 with a Gurukulam (hostel) for educating the poor Harijan children of the locality, this branch of the Ramakrishna Movement has since been tirelessly serving the society in a number of areas including value education, healthcare, propagation of Dharma, publication of Vedantic texts and spiritual ministration.



The Publication Dept. of this Math has published 300-odd books. By its unique service of decades, this Publishing House has contributed to the material and spiritual progress of the society. Although it has developed over the years, its infrastructure has not developed in line with the increase in the volume of work and the Dept. now works under spatial constraints.

It is under these circumstances that we plan to build a 4-storeyed 'Publication and Research Centre', estimated to cost Rs. 6 crores. The new building will house the Publication Godown, Despatch Office, Publications Office (Books Section), Prabuddhakeralam Magazine Office, Public Library, Research Section, Living Rooms for Monks and Guests etc.

So, we request our devotees and well-wishers to make generous contributions to realize this unique project. I am fully sure that this project will contribute greatly to the welfare of society for decades to come. We will be greatly thankful to you if you could contribute even partially.

Your donations may be sent as DD/Cheque in the name of 'Sri Ramakrishna Math' or transferred to our bank account: **A/c Name: SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH; SB A/c Number: 6711843752; Bank Name: Kotak Mahindra Bank; Branch Name: Thrissur; IFS Code: KKBK0000596.** All donations are exempt from income tax under section 80-G of the I.T. Act.

Thanking you in anticipation, Yours sincerely and affectionately,.

Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Puranattukara, Thrissur  
Kerala 680 551  
Phone : 082817 82193; 095261 72929  
Email : [thrissur@rkmm.org](mailto:thrissur@rkmm.org);  
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Yours in service,  
Swami Sadbhavananda  
Adhyaksha

### **SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH**

(A Branch of Rama krishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math)

**Puranattu kara P.O., Thrissur-680 551, Kerala.**

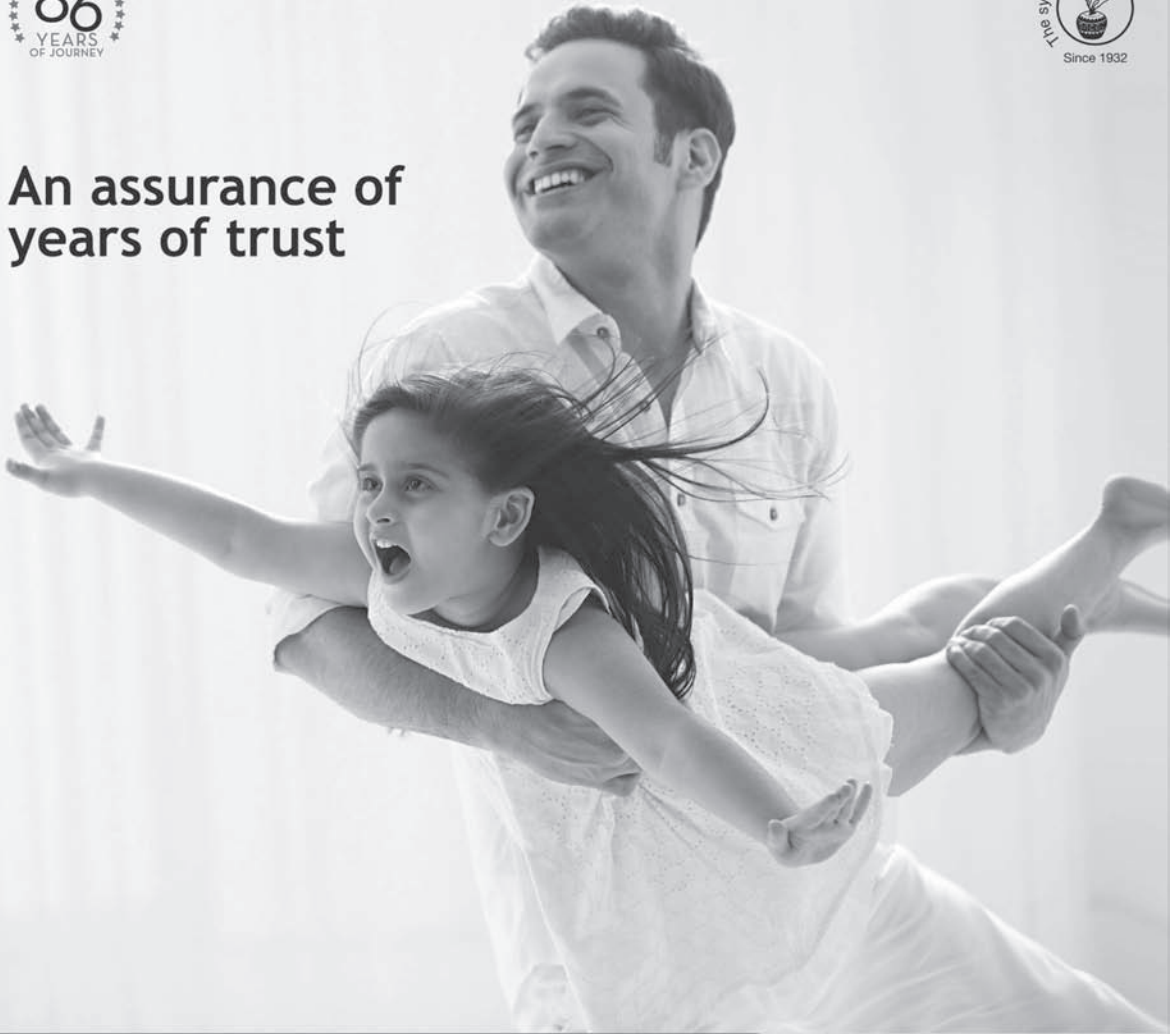
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*Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya*



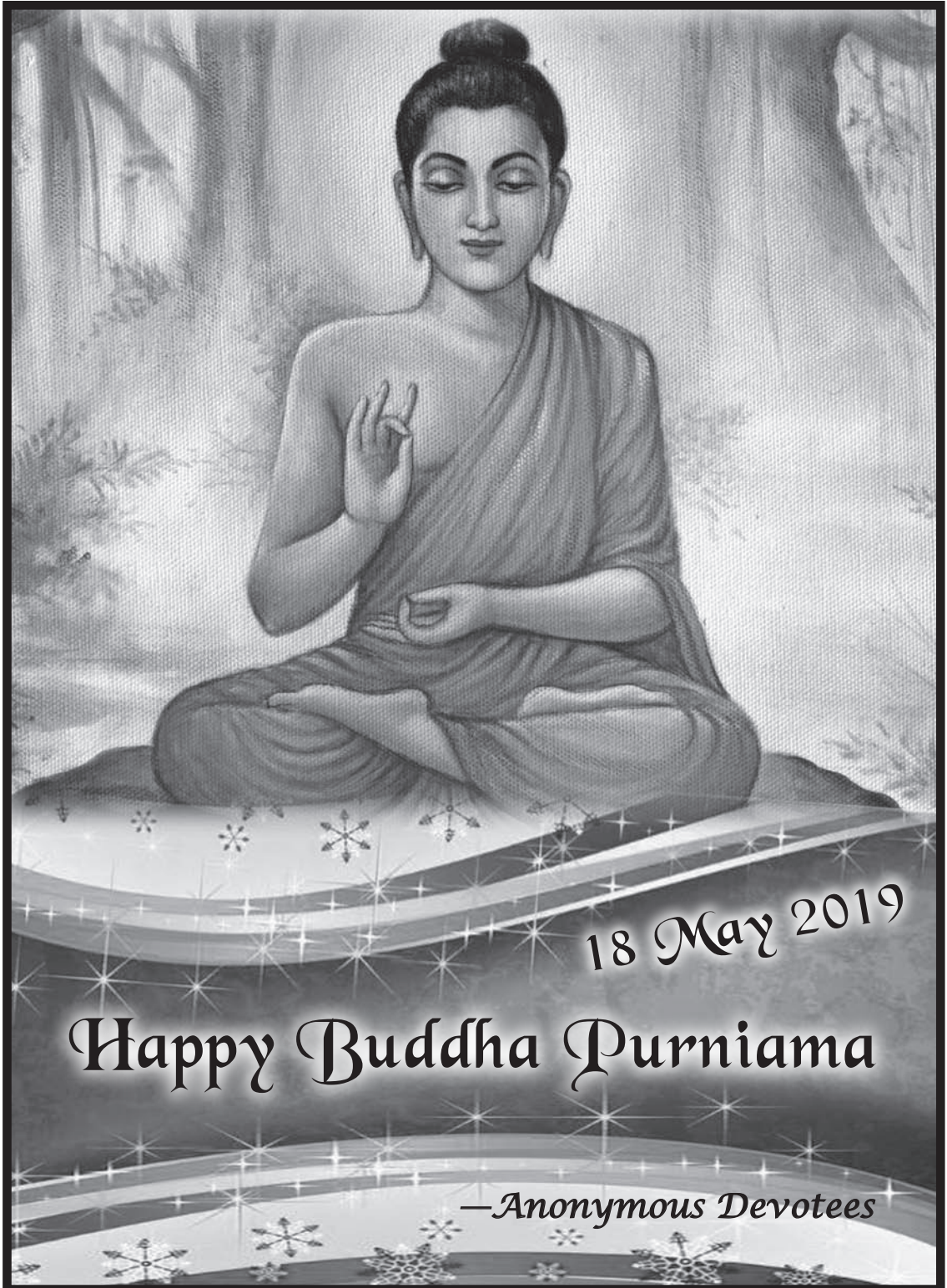
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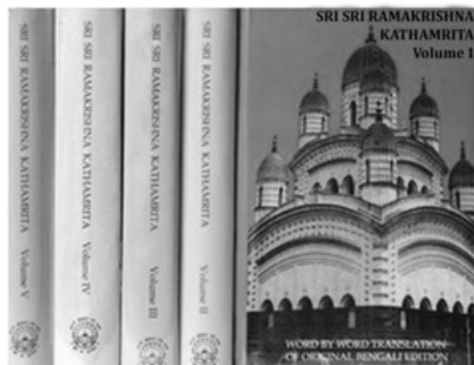


18 May 2019

Happy Buddha Purniama

—Anonymous Devotees





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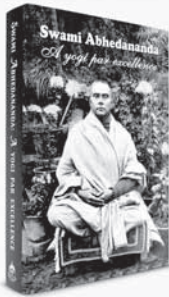
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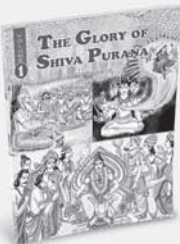
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*We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.*

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*Swami Vivekananda*

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## An Appeal

Dear Devotees,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

The temple at Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Nettayam, Thiruvananthapuram was constructed between 1916 and '24. Revered Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj, the spiritual son of Sri Sri Takkur and the first President of Ramakrishna Math, laid the foundation stone of this Ashrama in 1916 and Revered Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj consecrated it in 1924. Revered Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna had visited this Ashrama and got Sri Sri Takkur's vision in the shrine. The Ashrama is located on a hilltop at Nettayam in Trivandrum. This hundred year old Ashrama is an ideal place for worship, japa and meditation and an inspiration for sincere spiritual aspirants. Many senior monks of Ramakrishna Math had stayed and did tapasya here. Devotees visiting this serene, calm and holy place feel a spiritual current and often expressed it.

Due to ageing this important shrine is in a dilapidated condition and often leaks at multiple places during monsoon and as such a thorough revamping of the roof and other parts of the structure including the rubble construction is required to be done immediately to preserve it for posterity. The repair & renovation project will cover civil, electrical and structural work is estimated to cost rupees 52 lakhs. Ashrama has to mobilize this amount immediately for completing this noble work as early as possible so that the next all Kerala Sri Ramakrishna Devotees' Conference in May, 2019 can be held in the renovated Ashrama.

We earnestly request you to donate generously for this holy endeavor and be blessed by Sri Ramakrishna. Praying for the blessings of the Holy Trio,

5<sup>th</sup> December, 2018

Yours in Sri Ramakrishna,  
Swami Mokshavratanaanda,  
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Donations may be sent in favor of "Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Thiruvananthapuram" in the above address or deposited in any of the following bank accounts directly with an sms to (mob)8289916882.

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## PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



### Sri Ramakrishna visits Golap-Ma's House

Next, the Master arrived at the house of Golap-ma who was grief-stricken on account of her daughter's death. Entering the house, the Master passed the cowshed on his left. He and the devotees went up the stairs and to the roof, where they took seats. People were standing there in rows. They were all eager to get a glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna. Golap-ma had a sister who was also a widow. The brahmani had been busy all day making arrangements to receive Thakur. While the Master was at Nanda Bose's house she had been extremely restless, going out of the house every few minutes to see if he was coming. He had promised to come to her place from Nanda's. Because of his delay she had thought perhaps he would not come at all. Thakur was seated on a carpet. M. and others were seated on a mat. A few minutes later the younger Naren and some other devotees arrived. Golap-ma's sister saluted the Master and said, 'Golap-ma has just gone to Nanda Bose's house to inquire for your delay. She will return presently.' A sound was heard downstairs and she exclaimed, 'There she comes!' She went down. But it was not the brahmani. Devendra said to Thakur: 'M. says that this place is better than Nanda's. The devotion of these people is amazing.' Sri Ramakrishna laughed. Golap-ma then came and saluted the Master. She was beside

herself with joy. She did not know what to say. In a half-choked voice she said: 'This joy is too much for me. Perhaps I shall die of it. Tell me, friends, how shall I be able to live? Oh! Now I have no trace of my grief at my daughter's death. I was afraid he would not come. Then I thought that, if that happened, I should throw into the Ganges all the things I had arranged for his reception and entertainment. I should not speak to him anymore. If he visited a place, I should go there, look at him from a distance, and then come away.' She continued: 'A labourer won a hundred thousand rupees in a lottery. The moment he heard the news he died of joy. Yes, he really and truly died. I am afraid the same thing is going to happen to me. Please bless me, friends, or else I shall certainly die.' She was talking like this when her sister complained: 'Come down, sister! How can I manage things all by myself?' But Golap-ma could not take her eyes from the Master and the devotees. After a while she very respectfully took Sri Ramakrishna to another room (downstairs) and offered him sweets and other refreshments. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna was ready to leave. A man showed the way with a light. At places it was dark. Sri Ramakrishna stood in front of the cow-shed. The devotees gathered around him. M. saluted the Master, who was about to go to the house of Yogin-Ma. The house is presently located at 6/A, Nabin Sarkar Lane, Bagbazar.



Front of Golap-Ma's House



Thakur took refreshments in this room



M saluted Thakur here

*In loving memory of Dr. Rina Bhar —Dr. Gopal Chandra Bhar*

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*The best guide in life is strength. In religion,  
as in all other matters, discard everything  
that weakens you, have nothing to do  
with it.*

*—Swami Vivekananda*



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